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Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
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of Debates  
(Hansard)**

No. 71

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Mardi  
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Speaker: Honourable Dave Levac  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 April 2017

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 avril 2017

*The House met at 0900.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

*Prayers.*

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING  
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS  
EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'AIDE  
MÉDICALE À MOURIR

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 24, 2017, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to medical assistance in dying / Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'aide médicale à mourir.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** When we last debated this bill, the member from Nickel Belt had the floor and time remaining.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Yesterday I started what is called in this House an “hour lead”; that is, the third reading of the bill allows the critic on the bill to spend an hour putting a few thoughts on the record as to the bill, medical aid in dying. I used the first part of my talk to put on the record how we came to this place, how it is that here we are on third reading with a bill that is so, so divisive to our communities, with a bill that has so many people opposed to it, with serious, serious issues about it.

Medical aid in dying is something that has been requested by people in Ontario for quite some time. It had been challenged in the Supreme Court, which ruled that it should not be considered an offence. Then the federal government did its work to make medical aid in dying a non-criminal offence so that it could be provided, under certain circumstances, to people in Ontario. Finally, two years after that, the provincial government came forward with its own protection, mainly for people who will be involved in providing that care.

The problem, Speaker, is that we knew from the start that this was something that was divisive. We knew years ago that there was a group of Ontarians who wanted to gain access to medical aid in dying, who wanted to be in charge of the last day of their lives and who wanted medical aid to end their lives. At the same time, we knew that we had a group of people who were very much opposed to anything that had to do with medical aid in dying.

What other provinces have done is create a safe place for people—certainly people at both poles, but the people in their province—to put forward ideas, to find middle ground, to find a way to give access to the people who wanted access and to protect the conscience rights of people who opposed it. They did that through collaboration. They did that through giving people an opportunity to be heard and creating safe places for those talks to take place.

In Ontario, nothing was done. The first time that people had an opportunity to be heard was after second reading debate was completed on this bill and we opened it up to deputation. We had a huge list of people who wanted to be heard on medical aid in dying. We were asked to put priorities as to who we wanted to hear; and 43 of them had a chance to come and do a deputation and tell us how to improve the bill. But people who have really never been involved in the legislative process before thought, “This is a democracy. When my government is doing something that is important to me, I will have an opportunity to be on the record. I will have an opportunity to be heard. I will be part of this debate.” No, Speaker; for 51 of them, they stayed on the list. We never got to listen to them. They never got a chance to be heard at all. The whole process was wrong.

So what came forward is pretty much what had been put forward in the first place. I, as the critic for my party, put many amendments forward. The first amendment I put forward was to protect registered nurses, because from our experience, all those shorts in medical aid in dying have shown us that at pretty well every time medical aid in dying has been provided in Ontario, a registered nurse was there. So they asked to be named in the bill when it came time to say who will be protected, who will be immune from being brought in front of the court. Physicians are named; if they do their job properly, you cannot bring them in front of the court. The same thing with nurse practitioners. But the ones who are there most of the time, the registered nurses, are not named.

I put an amendment forward. I’m happy to say that the Progressive Conservatives voted in favour. The Liberals voted against. The same thing when I tried to make a change to the Excellent Care for All Act, which was part of medical aid in dying, to add registered nurses—the Liberals voted that down.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** That’s terrible.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** That’s not good.

Then, when we talked about section 13.8 in the bill, talking about immunity for health care workers, again, the Liberals voted that down. We went on to look—I’m

just going through my list of motions here; sorry, Speaker. We came to this motion. That was quite something. It was a motion that was put forward by the government for a care coordination service. The motion that was put forward by the government came first, and I had a very similar motion that came second. So my motion read that, "The minister shall establish a care coordination service to assist patients and caregivers in accessing additional information and services for medical assistance in dying and other end-of-life options." I put this amendment forward because, Speaker, this should have been done two years ago. This care coordination service should have been in place, like it was in every other province, because on June 17, 2016, it became legal in Ontario to have medical aid in dying. The service should have been provided, like it was in Quebec, like it was in Alberta, like it was in British Columbia, like it was in every other province and territory—but not in Ontario.

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After having been voted down—all of my amendments—this went from weird to bizarre. The amendment from the government was not as well defined as my amendment. So what they did is, the Liberal government changed their amendment to be written the exact same way as my amendment had been written so that we could pass theirs. Really? Medical aid in dying: Is this really the time to play politics and say the lawyer helping the Liberal side was a better writer than the lawyer helping the NDP side? That was pathetic. But this is what happened.

The good news out of this is that we will get a care coordination service. And the care coordination service won't be solely for accessing MAID but it will also be for other end-of-life options. Because there's always this risk that if you don't have access to good palliative care, you may choose medical aid in dying, but if you had access to good hospice care or if you had access to good palliative care in the setting of your choice, your options could have been different. So this will come, but it is coming too late.

On March 23, I asked the government, "Could you give me a briefing as to what the care coordination is going to look like?" Well, it's now April 25—by the way, bonne fête, Danielle; it's my sister's birthday so I just thought I would throw that out there—and I still haven't got a briefing on what the care coordination service is going to look like for medical assistance in dying.

All this to say that the lack of leadership and the lack of courage by this minister and this government to address an issue that everybody wanted them to address has led us to this awful place. This bill is going to go through; they have a majority government. The care coordination service is not there and good physicians throughout our province who were providing palliative care, who were providing good primary care, are going to cease in order to protect their conscience. It should have never come to this. We should have done way better. Shame on the Liberals.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Nickel Belt. I always enjoy her input, especially on health issues. We don't always agree, but I know that the input that she provides always comes from a good place, especially on a bill like this, Bill 84, medical assistance in dying. It's an issue that society has been trying to get its mind around for some time. It's time to move ahead, Speaker.

There are a number of concerns, obviously, that need to be addressed as you're moving through this process, and there are a number of people who play a major role in that. You've got the person themselves, perhaps, who is facing the end of their life and wants to have the dignity and the respect that comes along with making some decisions of their own in that regard. You've got our health care professionals, who are also the people who actually provide us with that care and whose natural instinct is to keep us alive, is to prolong life, is to make us better. That's what we rely on them for. Certainly when you have an issue like this that comes up, then a much different perspective is given on this. You've got the family members as well, who are going through—when a person is facing these types of decisions, they certainly lean on the family; it becomes more and more important. So a piece of legislation needs to take into account the perspectives of all three on this.

I think as this bill has moved through, some of the things we've seen addressed have been as a result of people who have brought forward their concerns to us along the way—some of the vulnerable populations, perhaps. The health care professionals need protection as well, both from a civil liability perspective and also from a perspective of their own personal conscience. I think we've accomplished that in Bill 84 to date.

I look forward to this continuing its way through the House and to its eventual passage because it's just a piece of legislation whose time has come.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt for her speech yesterday and this morning. I also want to thank her for her work in committee. I was in committee during clause-by-clause debate of Bill 84 on behalf of our critic, Mr. Yurek, and I actually have all the amendments that we tabled that the government voted down.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** How many did they adopt?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** The government voted down all of our amendments.

I made it very clear during second reading debate. I was the first opposition member to provide two-minute questions and comments when the member for Ottawa South, the parliamentary assistant, finished his maiden speech. I was the first MPP to make comments after the Minister of Health made his speech. I made it very clear, from this side of the House, that we wanted to see some amendments that dealt with conscience rights.

Our amendments, in some cases, took wordings from other jurisdictions that have successfully protected the conscience rights of health care providers without affecting patient access. Again, this government refused every single time we tabled one of those amendments. They refused to ensure that objecting doctors won't be forced to participate by providing an effective referral.

The one thing that I know that the member for Nickel Belt heard at committee was that there were a number of doctors who spoke to committee who said that they would be forced to stop treating palliative patients, and may even leave the profession, because of this situation, because of the fact that the government would not protect their conscience rights.

Our amendments included immunity on MAID and participation in MAID being voluntary. There were so many amendments that we put in there that we had hoped that this government would take into consideration the feelings of many in the medical community. They voted against every single one.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I too want to commend the member from Nickel Belt. She comes at this through a wide range of directions and a lot of information. Those points and all the amendments that our caucus brought forward—and I know that she worked tirelessly at committee bringing these issues forward—unfortunately went unanswered.

There were no accommodations. There was no open dialogue, and on something as important as this, there should have been opportunity there for dialogue. Why is it that in all other territories, in all other provinces, we have a care coordination service? Why can't we take that step? Why can't we recognize that that possibly might ease a lot of the concerns, the barriers, the walls for all who are in here? We've heard our doctors, our nurse practitioners. Why can't we have that dialogue? Why can't we sit down and say, "It's the right thing to do"?

Mr. Speaker, this is such a personal decision that one makes. I have a constituent in my riding who has talked to me about this decision that he wants to make or will make one of these days. He's not ready now, but he wants to have the right to make that decision. He needs to know that there is going to be an avenue, a resource that will actually listen to him. He's had an excellent relationship with the health care professionals that have been treating him, but because of what is lacking in this bill, he may be hit with a wall, something that he certainly doesn't deserve.

Again, making this decision is a personal one, but it involves your family, it involves your practitioners, it involves your doctors and it involves a huge decision that you're making. Building these walls is certainly not what this government should have done.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments? The Minister on the Status of Women and also responsible for early years and child care—that's a mouthful.

**Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris:** Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 84. Our government has introduced this legislation that, if passed, would support the implementation of medical assistance in dying by providing more protection and greater clarity for patients, their families and their health care providers.

No question this is a very sensitive issue, but it is an issue that communities and residents of our province and around our country have been grappling with for years. This new legislation absolutely brings clarity to this space and ensures a safe and consistent approach for physician-assisted dying across the country and here in our province. After all, we realize that end-of-life care is an important and complex issue. We're committed to a respectful patient-centred approach that supports patient choice while protecting the vulnerable. We have an obligation, an obligation to our professional health care workers and institutions, with regard to striking the right balance for our vulnerable, and that's absolutely what we're trying to do.

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So this new legislation ensures safe and consistent approaches for physicians. It also ensures benefits when it comes to workplace safety benefits. Health care professionals and those who assist them are protected from civil liability when lawfully providing medical assistance in dying. Health care providers and facilities that provide medical assistance in dying have their privacy protected. This is about bringing clarity to the space.

I would like to address the issue of consultations that was brought up by one of the members opposite. Absolutely, our Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care conducted biweekly webinars with large and diverse groups of stakeholders, including health care system leaders, professionals, sector organizations and patient advocates. We held town halls. We reached out to our stakeholders to get their input over a year, between the summer of 2015 and winter of 2016. So we've tried to do our due diligence.

Really, this is about striking the right balance when providing care to our vulnerable and patients in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** For final comments, we refer back to the member from Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Certainly, I would like to thank the Minister of Labour, the member from Leeds-Grenville, my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, as well as the Minister of the Status of Women, early years and child care.

The job was to make sure that people who wanted access have the right to access, that vulnerable people would be protected, and that people with conscience objections would have their conscience rights respected. We failed on all three. What we have in place right now is a 1-800 number. If you come from the northeast, there are zero providers that have put their names forward. That means that if you come from northeastern Ontario, it doesn't matter how able and willing your family's physician or nurse practitioner is, you will not be able to

get two independent assessments to decide if you meet the criteria and you will not be able to get medical assistance in dying.

If we look at the other side, where people wanted their conscience rights respected, we failed on that also. It didn't have to be that way. We saw this coming. The government should have taken the leadership to make sure, during those three years that this debate was going on, leading to the decriminalization on June 17, 2016, that a care coordination service should have been in place that day. And the care coordination service should have put in place what is being developed patchworkly through Ontario right now, so that every area of Ontario had a MAID team that people could phone to gain access, people could phone to learn about end-of-life issues, and that people who have objections to this could be protected because they wouldn't have to get involved, because it would already be there like it is in Alberta and like it is anywhere else. We failed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Speaker, I'm pleased to join this debate this morning. This is really one of the most sensitive issues we've ever had to debate in this chamber. Depending upon your perspective and the issue at hand, the world either moves too slow or just moves too fast. For some people on this issue, they'll say the world has moved too slow. But a lot of people in this province and across this country believe that the world has moved too fast on so many of these issues. Not that many years ago, if someone was involved in an assisted suicide—we can call it what it was called at that time—they were subject to criminal charges up to and including a murder charge. Today, we're bringing in legislation that talks about medical assistance in dying.

So you have to put yourself into the body and the frame and the mind of those people, and also those people who believed absolutely, at the very extreme, that assisted suicide was murder, or at the very least was wrong and criminal. Now they're living in a world where the courts have decided that you, as an individual, have the right to seek medical assistance in ending your own life and it is not subject to a criminal charge; in fact, no charges of any kind would be resulting from it.

So for those people who at the very core of their beliefs, whether it be on religious grounds or their own morality and their own ethics or whatever, it is heart-wrenching for them to live in a world where something that society in its laws said was wrong not that long ago—and still many people in society would believe that. Now that society has decided through its courts, and now that the federal government has tabled the legislation and we, as a province, are bound to table legislation that coordinates with the federal law—we're now here in a situation where those people are living in a different world than they believed existed.

So what do we do to recognize them? One of the things that we could have done on this divisive issue is ensure that any medical practitioner would not be

forced—because those people could also be doctors. They could be nurse practitioners. They could be registered nurses. They could be someone involved in the medical field. Why do we feel it is necessary—when they became a doctor or a nurse practitioner or a nurse, the law was different. They didn't sign on going in saying, "I recognize that the law will require me to participate in a medically assisted death." Their conscience rights now have been frittered away, have been taken away, because they are now bound by this law to be participatory in a medically assisted death. Put yourself in those shoes and ask yourself if you could possibly believe that this law, as it is drafted, is in any way, shape or form fair to you at the core. It is not.

How do we accommodate these people? How do we understand that they have the same rights as everybody else? Well, we could have brought into this law the conscience rights. In the second reading debate—and you will recall, Speaker, that our party supported this bill on second reading—every bit of response I received from the government side in the second reading debate indicated to me—maybe not absolutely but certainly in a tacit way—that they were going to deal with the conscience rights issue. Every time I spoke about it, and when my colleagues spoke about it, I saw nods from the parliamentary assistant to health, I saw nods from the Minister of Health, indicating that they recognized that that was missing from the bill as it existed and there was an intent that it was going to be dealt with and taken care of.

During that clause-by-clause—after the deputations, of which we heard from more than a few about the importance of conscience rights—my colleague from Leeds-Grenville, Mr. Clark, sat in there as our representative and brought forth reasoned amendments that would have ensured that the conscience rights of those people who felt that they could not be part of this would be respected. This government decided that wouldn't be done.

0930

Speaker, I think of my mother, who has been gone for over 40 years, but she was very strong in her religious beliefs. This would be something that would pain her deeply—would pain her deeply. First of all, she would be one of those people who would say that this is wrong. She was also a loyal Canadian and she would respect that the law of the land has indicated otherwise, but she would be livid if she felt that someone in the practice of medicine would not be allowed to be exempted for their personal beliefs. I'm not talking about something that you adopt for the sake of convenience; I'm talking about something, as I have said, that identifies you to the core of who you are.

We also asked, in amendment 11 that my colleague brought forward, that a care coordination service would support patient access to medical assistance in dying and other end-of-life options in Ontario. You see, that care coordination service would have acted, for lack of a better term, as a triage or a clearing house, so to speak, where people would go, where people could let it be known that they had made a decision, in conjunction with their family and perhaps their own closest people, that

they wanted to legally end their life and they wanted assistance in doing so. That service could have referred them to people who were comfortable in providing that service and, therefore, not involve a physician or nurse practitioner or someone else who did not feel that they could participate. The government did not adopt that amendment. They did amend to bring in a quasi-care coordination service, but it doesn't conduct itself in that way. It doesn't provide that service. It still requires those who have conscience beliefs where they cannot participate, it requires them to participate.

I remember when I was speaking in the debate earlier and I talked about how in 1962 we had our last hanging in our country, and at that time probably 95% of the population believed in capital punishment for certain crimes. It was only in—I'm not exactly sure when, but maybe in the late seventies when we actually banned capital punishment for good. But we would have had to have an executioner on standby or at least in the employ of the government to be able to provide that service if it was required. We wouldn't have taken somebody from the general law enforcement population and said, "You're the hangman. If we have a situation where someone is going to be executed, you're going to have to do it." No. We would not have done that because we would have understood that that person had certain beliefs. Just because someone believes in capital punishment, or believed in it at that time, does not mean that they would ever have the capability of pulling the lever on those gallows. We would have made sure that that person was comfortable in themselves that they could be the one.

Today, if you're in the medical profession, apparently this government doesn't care how you feel. Even though you came into the medical profession long before this was legal, you will have to participate and you will have to play your role. I believe that is wrong and I think a lot of people in this province believe that it is wrong. The government had ample opportunity to adopt these conscience rights in their bill.

We talked about and we read where, because we've had—I don't remember the exact number but it's well in the hundreds, might be well in the thousands—medically assisted deaths already since the law was adopted. It's already happening in absence of Bill 84. I have read that there are doctors who volunteered that they would be participants in medically assisted deaths and they believed that they could do this and they would be comfortable enough in doing it.

Then, after having actually participated in part of it, the conflict and the torment that they went through within themselves that they have now said, "I'm sorry, but I can no longer do this." That's not hard to understand. After having been part of the act, they've reflected on their role and they may have reflected on an awful lot of other things in a really big way and the big picture about their own life, and perhaps their own eternal life. They have decided that they can no longer be part of this.

If someone who said, "I'll be part of this, I'll participate, I will join the group of people that provide

this service for those who want it under the law," for someone like that to say, "I can no longer do this," just think of the emotion that they had to go through to come to that kind of conclusion. If this issue can have that kind of effect on them, how can we not recognize the effect that it has on someone who never believed in it in the first place? How can we ignore those human beings?

We talk here in this chamber about having compassion for everyone and recognizing that we all have our inner conscience, and then when we have an opportunity to recognize one's conscience in a very, very clear way, we deny them that right. We deny them that right to live by their conscience.

I recognize the point made by the member from Nickel Belt about the access in certain areas of the province, because medical access of many kinds is challenged in our most remote areas. We understand that. But the conscience rights doesn't affect if the service isn't available, period, because of lack of services in the area.

I am confident that if someone comes to the conclusion, along with their loved ones and their closest, that they make this choice to end their life by medical assistance, that the services are there—with those exceptions, and I understand, but that's not just this service and we want to be clear about that. Those services will be there and there will be more than enough practitioners who are willing and able to provide that service.

0940

Why do we have to force people to do something that they believe is wrong? Why do we do that? Why do we do the very thing that makes them question themselves? And there—whether they can live with themselves—why would we not allow those people to live within their own morality, within their own deeply held beliefs? Why do we have to force them to do something that, categorically, they believe to be wrong, not only from an ethical point of view but, for many of them, from a sinful point of view? Why do we do that?

We have an opportunity to recognize everyone's rights. We can recognize those people who have decided, "This is the way it's going to end for me." I understand that. I hope I'm never faced personally with that decision. I hope it happens to me quickly in my sleep in the middle of a good dream and I don't suffer and I don't have any terminal illnesses and life is just going along wonderfully till that day that I'm called. But I don't get to make that choice. I don't know what my health is going to be like today, tomorrow, the next day or whenever. I can't picture the future, but some people are living in that future today, and if they make those choices, I understand that.

I don't have any children involved in the medical profession. Our grandchildren are still so young that they have no profession other than they like toys and playing and bouncing on grampa's knee when he has the opportunity. They are that future. They are the legacy for all of us. Maybe one—we have nine today and, I hope, more on the way—not right now. Like, not this day, but I'm sure there will be more. I hope there will be more. But if one of those chooses to be a member of the medical pro-

fession, either a physician or a nurse practitioner or a nurse—and I can't presume what their personal beliefs will be at that time—but if their personal beliefs are such that they do not feel that they can be right within themselves or within their God that they can participate in this, then I would hope that they would not be forced to do something that is so much against their will.

I was very hopeful that the government, based on their responses to us, their body language and such, was going to bring in a real, definitive, clear, protective clause to respect conscience rights. Whatever their motive, I'm not even going to go there or question, but I believe that the decision at the end of the day was wrong and therefore, I cannot support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm very glad to be able to rise in this House and to add my thoughts on what is such an important bill. Here we are again, continuing the conversation about medical assistance in dying. It has been a long journey in this Legislature. I don't know about a long journey to get here overall; as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, this is a conversation that some would say is happening too quickly and others would say has been a long time coming and has been too slow. But here we are, and as we've heard from around the room, it's a very dividing conversation.

I would like to commend him for his very passionate remarks. I think that as he is sharing what he's hearing in his communities, as are we all, we need to be respectful of all the voices we've heard. I understand that at the committee process they heard very emotional comments, very personal and important comments, and we've heard that this bill, now here in third reading, does not reflect what it ought to. When we're talking about access and the balance with conscience rights, Speaker, it sounds like we've gotten it wrong with all of the different people at the table. As my colleague from Nickel Belt has said, this could have been done more carefully and come out with the right way forward—and that is not what we have, which is disappointing.

So, Speaker, I know that—sorry. I was just doing a count, making sure that we had enough people to respectfully continue the conversation; it would seem that we do. But, Speaker, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, anyone involved in this process needs to be comfortable in themselves, and we need to support those individuals. That needs to be a conversation going forward.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Hon. Chris Ballard:** This is certainly one of the tougher issues we've dealt with in my short time in the House. It's always easy to be able to sit back when you're not in a position of making these types of decisions and be the armchair quarterback. But when you're actually here and you actually have to vote on something, and you've been out listening to what your community has to say about such an important issue as Bill 84, it really gives you pause to think and consider all

the ramifications. I think it's so important to have heard what the members opposite have had to say, and I certainly respect their perspective and whatever struggles they and their community are going through.

I certainly can say, Speaker, that we realize that end-of-life care is a very important and very complex issue. With that in mind, we have been committed to developing a respectful, patient-centred approach that supports patient choice while protecting the vulnerable. The legislation helps to ensure a safe and consistent approach to physician-assisted dying across the country. We have an obligation to our professional health care workers and institutions with regard to striking that balance. I can say that we have no intention of requiring any clinician who is opposed to medical assistance in dying to participate in providing it. But, Speaker, it's expected that all provide the same level of care as they do with existing health care services when providing patients with medical-assistance-in-dying-related services.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions or comments?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I'm pleased to provide some more comment on third reading debate of Bill 84. I want to thank my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his very thoughtful comments. I'm sure it's no surprise to members of the House that I agree with what he said 100%. In fact, there were a couple of government members who actually came over and shook his hand, too. So I think there's widespread support for what he put on the record today.

As I said in committee, we tabled a number of amendments. I actually have all of them here that we tried to put forward in committee that would allow for conscience rights for health care providers without affecting patient care. I think it was very important right from the start for us to have that conversation. I wish that we had been able to convince the government to move forward.

There are ways that we can move forward and add conscience rights to this bill. I know that in second reading debate I talked about the fact that I felt that if the government wasn't prepared to put those measures in Bill 84, we should table a private member's bill and see if we could get all-party support. I hope that our critic, who has said in the past that he would do that, does move forward with that bill.

**0950**

There are other measures we can do, and I have the amendments here. I'm prepared to ask for unanimous consent that we move into Committee of the Whole House and deal with Bill 84 and do those amendments right now. I'd be interested in having a consensus of the House to move forward in that manner.

I ask for unanimous consent to move into Committee of the Whole House to deal with the PC amendments on Bill 84.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Is there unanimous consent to deal with the—I heard a no.

Further questions and comments?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I probably can say that this is one of the most prevalent bills that has come

before the Legislature since I have had the honour of being the MPP for London-Fanshawe, and also the most divisive bill, I think, that has come forward, because of the topic. The topic that we're talking about is something that we're all going to have to deal with, and I think we need to deal with it through legislation so that when people come to that stage in their life, there is that comfort and understanding of what the responsibilities are of professionals to their patients and what services the patients can access if they choose that decision.

When I heard the member from Nickel Belt today talking about that there's still not a care coordination service program in place under this bill, I had to get the bill to believe it. I was in committee; I took the opportunity to sit in committee when I could through my schedule to hear the presentations and the deputations from both sides, and it was clear that this needed to happen. The government failed in doing that.

This is what the explanatory note says: "The minister is required to establish a care coordination service to assist patients and caregivers in accessing additional information and services for medical assistance in dying and other end-of-life options."

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Yes.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I respect the member from London North Centre; she's here for this debate.

With all due respect, this is such important and necessary legislation that the hearings, the research and the discussions should have been done for this consideration under conscience objection.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** For final comments, I return to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I want to thank the member from Oshawa, the Minister of Housing, the member from Leeds-Grenville and the member from London-Fanshawe for their comments. Obviously it is a divisive issue because everyone keeps commenting on that.

The member from London-Fanshawe pointed out something that is obvious: We are all going to die. We don't know when, but we are all going to die, and we have a wonderful option available to people. We've invested an awful lot in this province in our hospice care facilities, which give people the option of having compassionate care in an absolutely wonderful way. I'm quite aware of the care that is offered in my riding at Hospice Renfrew, and also beds in Barry's Bay, as well. I'm afraid that we're almost saying to people, "Here's a better option."

You see, when people go to hospice they go to hospice knowing that the end is coming, possibly soon, but they want to be in the hands of a caring, compassionate group of people who want to assist them in making that transition and that journey as comfortable as possible. So what are we saying to those people? We're saying there is another option, I understand that, but it's almost like we're pushing people into a different decision. I hope that we are not going to be going out now and promoting this as a way of saving money in our health care system or in our hospice system.

The decision not to have conscience rights was wrong. I stand by that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 84 this morning. I spoke to Bill 84 at second reading. I know a number of my colleagues on this side of the House offered up a number of suggestions and arguments at second reading debate for the government to consider and to encourage them to have an open mind, to improve the bill and listen to people in a manner that would permit the bill to be improved upon.

Unfortunately, committee has come and passed, and the amendments and our words of encouragement requesting the government to consider other alternatives to improve medical assistance in dying have gone unheeded. All the opposition amendments have been voted down by the government.

In principle, the Progressive Conservative Party supports the bill. That's why we voted in favour of it at second reading to go to committee. In principle, it's an important bill, but we did have an expectation that the committee process would indeed be allowed and permitted to operate, to flesh out good and better ideas, to hear from interested people, and to use that process to improve the bill.

This is not a bill that should be used in a partisan fashion. It should not be advanced only for political or partisan gain. It should be done in the public interest. We're talking about assisting people at the end of their life. There ought not to be anything partisan or political about it. Unfortunately, opposition amendments were all voted down along partisan lines.

During second reading debate, I commented during debate about how respectful the discussion and the debate had been thus far on Bill 84, on the compassion, the sincerity and the interests of all members to work towards a most appropriate legislative framework to assist people at the end of their life's journey. I was struck by how thoughtful the discussion had been during second reading debate.

I recall, at the time I said, "If only we could have this level of discussion and quality of debate when it came to medical assistance in living, how grand that would be if we put the public interest forward and worked towards medical assistance in living as well as in death." Some of these things have been exposed and have been talked about today in this House and during committee.

One of the amendments put forward by the Progressive Conservative Party was to ensure universality and accessibility for palliative care and hospices. I'll say to all members in the House who are here and listening and to those listening elsewhere, there are a great many communities in our province—a great many in communities in my riding alone—that do not have any hospices. Those people, at end of life, don't have access to palliative care and end-of-life care in their communities. That's a shortcoming that we ought to address. This Liberal government voted against our amendment to ensure univers-

ality and accessibility for hospice care for those nearing the end of life. I don't know how they did it. I don't know how they felt comfortable enough to turn down that amendment, Speaker.

1000

But there were others. One of our strong positions on Bill 84 was to protect the conscientious objectors in the health care practices: physicians, nurses—all those professional health care providers. They have shown us and they have told us that there needs to be protection for conscientious objection, for those people who find it morally objectionable to provide assistance in death—that this legislation ought to protect their desire not to participate or assist in the death of an individual.

Our country recognizes that fundamental freedom in our charter. There are some grey areas, but we recognize that we ought never to impose on someone an obligation that is morally objectionable to them on matters of faith or conviction; our legislation must protect one's moral compass, not skew it.

That was one of our many amendments that were voted down by this Liberal government. They would not protect that conscientious objection from a health care professional. I find that reprehensible, Speaker—reprehensible that a Liberal government would not protect the fundamental freedoms of our health care professionals and would compel them to be engaged and involved in a practice that is against their deeply held moral convictions or faith.

I should read a number of those amendments into the House just so all members understand what their party did on their behalf during the committee process. Here's an amendment. It was a PC motion, and it was under section 13.10 of the bill. It starts off by saying:

“Participation in MAID”—medical assistance in dying—“voluntary

“13.10(1) Participation in medical assistance in dying shall be voluntary. A person may refuse to do something that is for the purpose of medical assistance in dying. This includes refusing to,” and it lists a number of items.

Can we imagine that this government refused—refused—they voted down this amendment on voluntary assistance in medical assistance in dying. They're imposing their view upon the convictions and faith of health care professionals without any regard for those individuals—no regard for those individuals. Is that really the stock-in-trade and hallmark of a Liberal government, to impose their view on what shall be done? I think the Liberal government has strayed far—strayed very far—from the tenets and principles of liberalism, Speaker, when they refuse to protect the individual freedoms and convictions of individuals in society.

Again, there is a host of these amendments, Speaker. I will speak to some of them because I would like, in the questions and comments that follow my debate, the members present on the opposite side to provide me and my colleagues, the opposition members, with some rationale for why they have done what they've done in committee. You know, that's what debate is. Debate is a

ventilation and a scrutiny of the decisions made by this House. I think it's important that the members opposite explain to me, explain to society, explain to all of us why they have strayed so far from their fundamental purposes and principles.

Here's another PC motion, under section 7 of the bill:

“Medical assistance in dying

“29.2(1) Member participation in medical assistance in dying shall be voluntary.”

It “shall be voluntary.” Speaker, why would the Liberal government and their members on that committee strike down such amendments? Why would they vote down these concepts that participation in medical assistance in dying shall be voluntary?

I notice the minister across looking puzzled. You know, this is on the record. Your government, your colleagues, voted these things down in committee on your behalf. It's important for you to know what your party is doing in your name. If these actions are not consistent with your convictions, with your principles, then there's a duty and an obligation to speak out and express yourself.

Once again, we're seeing that this government did not hear our pleas during second reading. They did not hear the sound requests and arguments put forth by so many people who came to the committee hearings. These amendments that were put forward were not amendments that we found in the hallway. These amendments were based on those discussions in committee. These amendments were based on listening and hearing from people who will be impacted by this legislation. We will all be impacted in some ways, but many people will be impacted very directly by this, so we do have an obligation to listen attentively and with interest and with compassion about those people who will be impacted directly by our legislation, Speaker.

When we develop public policy, it has to be in the public interest with regard for those people who will be impacted directly. The government has failed in this regard, failed in this process on Bill 84. They have allowed and permitted their partisanship to impede, prevent and obstruct the development of good public policy in the public interest for some partisan interests. It's unfortunate. As I started out at the beginning, this bill, amongst very few bills, by any objective measure, ought not to be partisan, right? Medical assistance in dying is too important a bill to be skewed and distorted with partisanship.

My colleague from Leeds-Grenville put forward a motion without notice seeking unanimous consent that the House resolve into a Committee of the Whole to discuss these amendments that were struck down in committee. I think it was a valid and appropriate undertaking by the member from Leeds-Grenville. I would hope that the members opposite recognize and understand the importance of protecting freedoms of conscience, freedoms of protecting and upholding those deeply held convictions and assisting those who have moral objections to participating in someone's death.

I think resolving into a Committee of the Whole to discuss this is an appropriate function. Maybe the members here in the House this morning are not suitably prepared to engage in that discussion and debate on the opposite side. We only have a few more minutes before adjournment of the session. I would suggest that we adopt that idea and in the interlude between adjournment of the morning session and after routine proceedings this afternoon, the Liberal members could be adequately prepared to engage in this debate.

So, Speaker, I will ask to move and seek unanimous consent that this House resolve into a Committee of the Whole to examine and evaluate the amendments to Bill 84.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The House has already made a decision on that particular motion, so unfortunately I have to deny the motion.

*Third reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** It is now close to 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

*The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Bill Walker:** I'd like to welcome everyone here from the Canadian Cancer Society, with a particular interest and welcome to Raghda Salim, Melanie Wong and Zier Zhou, who are youth members and volunteers; and Lera Ryan from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who is a stellar, stellar advocate.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I have some very special guests today. I have Ellen White from Barrie; her grandson Carter Mitchell, from Barrie; Captain Todd D'Andrade, who has been a proud member of our military since 1983; and Allison Downie, Will Downie and Josephine Downie from Tasmania, Australia. I'd like to welcome them to our great province.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** Today I would like to welcome two constituents to Queen's Park from my riding of Barrie: Kris Bonn, who is here today with the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association; and Lily Chen, who's here with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

Also, guests of page Gabriel Kotch: His aunt Lorna McBrien and uncle Ed McBrien are in the public gallery this morning. Welcome.

**Mr. Monte McNaughton:** I would like to welcome the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association to Queen's Park today: Adam Wagman, president; Claire Wilkinson, president-elect; Ron Bohm, vice-president; Linda Langston, CEO; and John Karapita, director of public affairs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I would like to welcome my good friend Patrick Sackville from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. They are here for their lobby day and are welcoming everybody at their reception tonight in rooms 228 and 230.

**Hon. Reza Moridi:** On behalf of MPP Delaney and MPP Kiwala, it is my great pleasure to welcome Mr.

Erdeniz Sen, consul general of Turkey; and Ms. Yildiz Unsal and Dr. Mehmet Bor. Please join me in welcoming them.

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I would like to introduce one of my constituents, Val Davidson, a member of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. She is here today in the Legislature. Welcome.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** We have a great number of young people up today from the Windsor area for the Canadian Cancer Society breakfast. I'd like to welcome Kelly Rosaasen; her daughter, Alysha Rosaasen; Shannon Mcneil; Christina Zhang; Ali Menaidli; John Talia; Samantha Girard; Kamal Mann; Taven Mann; Regina Yuen; and Rakshan Kamran. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for what you do with the Canadian Cancer Society.

**Mr. Harinder S. Takhar:** I want to welcome the grade 12 class from St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School from my riding of Mississauga-Erindale to the Legislature today. I also want to welcome their teacher, Ms. Quesnelle, as well.

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** I'm pleased to introduce Mehemed Delibasic, who is here with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I would like to welcome four amazing young people who are here today from Youth CAN in London, advocating on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society: Elisa Moglan, Julia Mroz, Ashfar Bashar and Tunya Langsub. Welcome.

**Ms. Sophie Kiwala:** I would like to extend a warm welcome to Jamuna Yoganathan from my riding of Kingston and the Islands, who's a new graduate from Queen's University.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** We have a very large number of introductions, so let's just keep it quick and brief, please.

**Mr. Michael Harris:** I'd like to welcome Jerome James from the professional engineers. Welcome.

**Mme France Gélinas:** I too want to thank the members from the Canadian Cancer Society who are here today, especially Kelly Gorman and Joanne Di Nardo. Thank you for all you do for the cancer society.

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** I'd like to welcome Mark Donohue, Alison Payne and Kendra Willis from the Peterborough branch of the Canadian Cancer Society.

**Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I rise to welcome Andrew Toye Ojo from my riding of Scarborough-Rouge River. Andrew is here with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers as part of their Queen's Park lobby day, where they are presenting groundbreaking original research on the engineering challenges facing Ontario storm water management systems.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** I would like to introduce Ahmad Gaied, executive vice-president of the OFL, and Thevaki Thevaratnam, a researcher at the OFL, who are joining us here today, as well as Mr. John Karapita from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association.

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** I'm pleased to welcome Ninder Thind from my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton

South. She is the mother of page Gurjaap Brar. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I would like to welcome to the House today Roger Martin, the manager of the Canadian Cancer Society in Renfrew county.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I am delighted to welcome the mother of page Eesha Rehan. Her mother is in the gallery today: Nazish Malik. Welcome to the Legislature.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** From London, members of the Trial Lawyers Association: Alfonso Campos, Maia Bent and Maciek Piekosz.

Also, Speaker, from Qatar, we have a delegation. I will leave the introduction to you for the—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Yes, sir. But I would also like to introduce from the delegation Ahmed Al-Hammadi, Mohammed Al-Sowaidi, Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa and Bashir Kalisa, Speaker, and there are more coming, I know, from you.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** That's another way around it.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I would like to introduce the guests of page John-Stanley Black: his mother, Jennifer Black, and his sisters Amiera and Sadie Black.

**Hon. Yasir Naqvi:** I also want to welcome the delegation from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. Please welcome Adam Wagman, president; Claire Wilkinson, president-elect; Ron Bohm, vice-president; Linda Langston, CEO; and John Karapita, director of public affairs.

They're hosting a reception in the dining room from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. tonight.

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** I would like to introduce in the gallery today Tim Schindel; Hannah Putz, originally from Mississauga, now in Rochester, USA; Jane Parent; Jill Morris; Grace Carrothers; and Annita and Derk Maat from Oakville.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I'd like to welcome Alfonso Campos Reales, who is here today from London with the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association.

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** I'm pleased to welcome in the Legislature this morning Nedenia Rocha. She is the mother of Pickering page Charlene Rocha. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** I'd like to introduce Pat Sackville and Arjan Arenja from Professional Engineers Ontario.

**Hon. Glen R. Murray:** I would like to welcome from my constituency Arthur Sinclair, from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, who are here as part of their lobby day. They have a reception in rooms 228 and 230.

As well, guests of my page, Kaitlin Grierson, from Toronto Centre: her mother, Catharine Ann Matthews, and her father, David Harry Grierson.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I'd like to introduce Dave Schneider from the Canadian Cancer Society and a member of the NPDPR.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** Please help me welcome Christina Visser from Sudbury, who is here with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Please welcome Sandro Perruzza, the CEO of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, whose members from across the province are visiting us today. There is a reception I will be hosting in rooms 228 and 230 later on today.

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** J'aimerais accueillir Michael Monette d'Ottawa, qui est le président and the chair of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Victor Fedeli:** I rise to welcome two people, John Severino and Lindsay Keats, both from my riding of Nipissing. They're here with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

**Mr. James J. Bradley:** I would like to welcome Mary Ransom, from the Canadian Cancer Society of Niagara, who is with us today at the Legislature.

**L<sup>hon.</sup> Marie-France Lalonde:** Hier, nous avons célébré six récipiendaires de l'Ordre de la Pléiade. C'est avec beaucoup d'honneur qu'un des résidents d'Ottawa-Orléans l'a reçu. Marcel Gibeault et son épouse, Claudette, sont ici avec nous. Bienvenue à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

1040

**Mrs. Cristina Martins:** Good morning, Speaker. Our page captain today is Matthew Harris from the great riding of Davenport. He's joined here today by some very special guests: His mother, Angela Van Damme; his father, Chris Harris; and his grandmother Margaret Flynn. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I'd like to welcome lawyer Kris Bonn from Bonn Law service in Trenton. Welcome.

**Mr. Yvan Baker:** I'd just like to welcome Marilyn Spink and Jamie Gerson who are here from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers and constituents of mine in Etobicoke Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Hon. Reza Moridi:** Please join me in welcoming Vam Thurairajah and Akan Thurairajah, parents of page captain Rishi Thurairajah.

**Mrs. Cristina Martins:** I have another guest from my riding of Davenport, Marina Freire-Gormaly, who is here with my good friend Sandro Perruzza. They're here today with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. Welcome.

**Mr. Yvan Baker:** I'd like to welcome the guests of page Kate Winterton: Her mother, Jennifer Krikorian; and aunt Jacqueline Krikorian. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** I'd like to welcome and say es salaam aleikum to the ISNA Islamic Schools from Mississauga.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** With us today in the Speaker's gallery we have two delegations. From the Parliament of the Czech Republic, the parliamentary Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport led by deputy Jiří Zlatuška. He is accompanied by His Excellency Pavel Hrnčíř, the ambassador of the Czech Republic to Canada. Welcome to your delegation. Thank you for joining us.

Also in the Speaker's gallery, we do have a delegation from the State of Qatar led by Minister of State Sheikh

Abdulla Bin Mohammed Bin Saud Al-Thani, accompanied by the ambassador of Qatar to Canada, His Excellency Fahad Kafoud. Thank you. Welcome. We're glad you're with us today.

### LEGISLATIVE PAGES

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Also, as you know is the tradition, we like to introduce new pages. If I could get them to assemble, please.

By the way, while they're assembling, if there is anyone who was not introduced today, just raise your hand. Welcome. We're glad you're with us.

Charlene Rocha from Ajax–Pickering; Claire Le Donne from Hamilton Mountain; Eesha Rehan from London–Fanshawe; Emma Yu from Parkdale–High Park; Gabriel Kotch from Barrie; Gurjaap Brar from Mississauga–Brampton South; Hayden Cox from Scarborough Southwest; Iman Chowdhury from Scarborough Centre; Jeremi Kolakowski from Willowdale; John-Stanley Black from Perth–Wellington; Kaitlin Grierson from Toronto Centre; Kate Winterton from Etobicoke Centre; Kenna Smallegan from Halton; Maddison Rose from Essex; Madeleine Alexander from St. Catharines; Margaret Yurek from Elgin–Middlesex–London; Matt Harris from Davenport; Matthew Howell from Nepean–Carleton; Noah Hatton from Brampton West; Peter Schneider from Brampton–Springdale; Radana Biarzoza from Northumberland–Quinte West; Rishikan Thurairajah from Richmond Hill; and Sofija Bulatovic from York Centre.

These are our pages for this session.

*Applause.*

### WEARING OF PINS

**Hon. Yasir Naqvi:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Point of order, the government House leader.

**Hon. Yasir Naqvi:** I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear daffodil pins in recognition of the Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I'm glad to see the enthusiasm of some people who have covered it up before we do the unanimous consent.

The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to wear the daffodil pins. Do we agree? Agreed. Now you may wear them.

I thank you for that. Therefore, it is now time for question period.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, a minister of the crown made a \$150-million announcement. That's no small amount of money. What

was the minister's response when she was asked where the money was coming from? She said—this is a direct quote: "I'm actually not quite sure where it's coming from." Can you believe that, Mr. Speaker? She actually said she had no idea where the funds were coming from.

Can the Premier tell us where the money is coming from for that announcement?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** First of all, let me make a shout-out to the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Housing for the announcement yesterday. The idea of a basic income has been around for a very long time. The Honourable Hugh Segal, who some members in the party opposite might know, has been talking about this and has worked with researchers. To have the opportunity as a government to put in place a pilot project on a basic income at a time when work is uncertain, when we have a global economy that is uncertain—we know that finding the data and getting the information from this basic income pilot is extremely important. Not just here in Ontario but internationally, there's a great deal of attention being paid to the outcomes of the basic income pilot.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Again to the Premier: I didn't get an answer on the question of where the funds were going to come from. The minister of the crown had no idea.

The reality is—and this might be a news flash for this government—money doesn't grow on trees. It actually has to come from somewhere. The spin afterwards by the government, saying it could come from the budget—the budget doesn't produce money. The budget doesn't pay taxes. The budget doesn't pay fees. Taxpayers pay fees. Taxpayers work hard. To have a government right now that is completely disrespectful of taxpayer funds making announcements with no idea how they're going to pay for them—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of Housing.

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get an answer. The government made an announcement yesterday. They had no idea where it's coming from. Can the Premier show this Legislature the decency to tell us where that \$150 million is going to come from?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I look forward to Thursday, when it will be laid out very clearly how our balanced budget builds on the platform that we have put in place over the last number of years. We have been working very hard to get to the point where we could invest in the people of this province, which we have been doing all along. To balance the budget actually gives us the opportunity to take the next step, to further invest in the people of this province and do the things that we know are necessary in order to build the inclusive economy that we know is necessary for this province and for the people who are struggling with uncertainty.

I'm not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't support the basic income pilot. I'm not surprised

at all, because this is a party that has a history of cutting public services, of actually undermining the foundation of the social safety network and the services that have been delivered in this province. This is a good thing.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Without comment. Start the clock.

Final supplementary?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Again to the Premier: If the Liberals were sincere about their announcement they would have had some idea of how they're going to pay for it. The reality is, after 14 years, Ontarians work harder, they pay more and they get less in Liberal Ontario. The cost of everything is going up, so it worries me when they make announcements with no clue of how they're going to be paid for. If there's one thing I know about this Liberal government, if there's one thing they're good at, it's raising taxes. When they make an announcement with no clue how it's going to be paid for, the reality is, it's new taxes.

Can the Premier assure us that they're not going to pay for this announcement through new taxes?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** What I can assure the member opposite of is that we will be bringing in a balanced budget on Thursday, a balanced budget that will allow us to make investments in the lives of people in this province.

1050

A basic income pilot is part of that, making sure that we have the evidence to demonstrate whether such an initiative would actually be able to be rolled out across the province, whether it would help with precarious employment and the realities of displacement because of technology, because of—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Because of the changing nature of work. This is a huge opportunity to get evidence that will help us to make good decisions going forward—and not just us, but internationally.

## GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** My question is for the Premier. We know the Liberal government gave the Gandalf Group over \$3 million of taxpayers' money to complete polling. Let's just remember that the Gandalf Group is led by the Liberal Premier's campaign manager, David Herle.

Mr. Speaker, can we get some assurances today from the Premier that this thank you to David Herle ended at the \$3-million mark? Can the Premier assure us no more taxpayer money is going to be used to fund the Gandalf Group?

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Premier?

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Just a sec. I have to give it to you.

President of the Treasury Board.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** President of the Treasury Board.

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** We will sort this out. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Government Advertising Act is very, very clear. The people who get government advertising contracts actually go through a competitive procurement process. If anybody, any firm, has a contract to do government advertising, that firm has gone through a procurement process. Some of them might have been Liberal. Some might have Tory ties. Some might have NDP ties. Some might have no ties. It doesn't actually matter because what they all have in common is that they go through a public procurement process.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Again to the Premier: I can appreciate why the Premier doesn't want to be on the record on this: \$3 million to the Gandalf Group—\$3 million—and the minister says there is a strict process to determine who gets these polling contracts? Is the qualification to be on the Liberal campaign team? Because this doesn't add up.

The reality is, the research that has been released publicly—they're not even using the polling. The polling said that 70% were against the fire sale of Hydro One. They don't care; they proceed. It said that 84% of people oppose ending coverage of some health care services, and they cut the budget of physicians anyway.

If you're paying millions of dollars in polling and you don't use the polling, the impression that's left is this is simply a thank you to your campaign manager. Be honest with the people of Ontario and explain why this \$3 million was spent on the Liberal campaign manager.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Thank you.

President?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** My apologies; you're usually asking about advertising. Sorry, I didn't catch it was polling. But, in fact, the answer is actually the same. If you are going to do market research for the government, you must go through a competitive procurement process.

The Gandalf Group, like absolutely anybody else who does market research for the government of Ontario, whether that's a Liberal government or a Tory government or an NDP government, has gone through a competitive procurement—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Finish, please.

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** And the decisions about which vendor is suitable after there's an additional bid, the finalists go through a committee process which is a bureaucratic process, not a government process or a political process, to arrive at the—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you.

Final supplementary?

**Mr. Patrick Brown:** Again to the Premier: I'd appreciate it if the Premier could answer this for the House.

This Liberal thank-you program, where millions of dollars go out to the Liberal campaign officials, in this case the campaign manager—one of the questions they actually polled was interesting. It said that they're asking what the public support would be for raising the HST. Of course, the vast majority of Ontario—69%—oppose the idea. But given the fact that they have ignored all the previous polling, can we now assume that we're going to see a raise in the HST? Can the Premier assure the House today that the HST is not going to be raised?

**Hon. Liz Sandals:** Apparently, the member opposite hasn't quite understood yet that this is a competitive process. We have a number of vendors of record on our "market research vendor of record" list. For example—and I'm quoting from the 2014-15 public accounts, which you have access to—the other market research firms included Forum Research, Ipsos Reid, the Strategic Counsel, EKOS Research, Environics Research and Harris-Decima.

So it isn't just one firm. A variety of firms have been the winner when it comes to competitive procurement of government contracts for market research. In fact, it doesn't matter what you procure; it is a competitive—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. New question.

## PHARMACARE

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** My question is to the Premier. More than two million Ontarians do not have drug coverage. One in four Ontarians cannot purchase the medications that they need to save their lives. Ontario is one of the wealthiest provinces in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. It's simply unacceptable with the current situation.

People are going without the medication that will save their lives. This is just unbelievable. Does the Premier think that it's okay for this to go on in our province?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** As a government, we know how critical it is for the people of Ontario to have access to affordable and quality health care close to home, and that includes pharmacare. We believe that increasing access to pharmacare is a good idea, and we understand that this is an extremely important issue for the people of Ontario. The Minister of Health has been engaged in this conversation across the country. We understand that this is a very important idea, and I appreciate the question from the member.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** New Democrats believe in national pharmacare, but we have been waiting for national pharmacare for 50 years. If Tommy Douglas had waited for the federal government to act, we would have American-style health care here in Ontario. I don't think that people should have to wait for the federal government to act in order to have access to medication that will save their lives.

Ontario New Democrats are going to do something about it. That's why we have announced our plan for

pharmacare. How long is this government going to have people wait before they get the coverage for life-saving medication that they need so desperately?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I know the member opposite knows my own views on this and the views of this government: how critically important it is that Ontarians and Canadians across this country have access to the drugs that they need, the prescribed medications that will keep them well, or will get them well if they fall ill. It's an issue that the Premier has been championing for a long time.

I am really pleased that, after three years of our advocacy on the national stage, the NDP has finally decided to come to the table and join in our efforts to provide that access, because they haven't addressed this publicly prior to just very recently.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Final supplementary?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** New Democrats believe our health care system should include medical coverage. People should not be in a situation where they cannot access life-saving medication that they need. People shouldn't have to wait for Ottawa to maybe one day hopefully get its act together.

Why does the Premier think it's okay that people are waiting to receive this desperately needed coverage, to receive the coverage that they need right now?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I know that this is an important issue to this government. It's an important issue to me as a health care practitioner.

1100

I was just reviewing an op-ed that I wrote way back in December 2014 that spoke to my own experience as a physician. The practice that I've worked in for over 20 years is exclusively immigrants and refugees, primarily from the Horn of Africa. They're individuals that are of lower socio-economic status, and I spoke of the many, many times where I knew if I gave a prescription to these individuals, those families, it was unlikely that they would have the resources to fill it. Or I would have to go into my sample drawer to actually provide them with a sample prescription because I knew they couldn't afford to get it from a pharmacist. I understand how vitally important access to medicines is and, again, I welcome their recent advocacy on this issue.

## PHARMACARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour la première ministre. Yesterday and again this morning, the Minister of Health agreed with my leader and the NDP that pharmacare is the unfinished business of medicare that was envisioned 51 years ago. New Democrats want to finish that business. We want people to get the life-saving medications that they need and we are ready to do something about it. Why aren't the Liberals?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I'm proud of many of the activities that this government has been responsible for when it comes to prescription drugs. Some 170,000 more seniors are no longer paying the \$100 annual deductible.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you, Minister?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** Some 170,000 more seniors in this province since last year's budget are receiving their medications without any annual deductible at all and with the copayment reduced from \$6 down to \$2 per prescription, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of the work that we have been doing nationally with the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, as well, where nationally we have saved over \$700 million through bulk purchasing and bulk negotiating.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Back to the Premier. The Premier may want to wait for her federal cousins, but Ontario cannot afford to wait. We cannot afford not to have pharmacare. Does the Premier believe people in Ontario should have universal access to medication?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** Mr. Speaker, we announced earlier this year that we would be providing hepatitis C treatment to anyone with a diagnosis of hepatitis C infection, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars to Ontarians. But this is almost a cure. In 95% of the cases, it results in a cure and it's a dramatic new development in this field of treatment of hepatitis C.

These are the kinds of investments that we're making, and we're constantly adding medicines to our formulary as the evidence proves their efficacy and their value in treating and providing that important treatment to Ontarians. Last time I checked it—because we would welcome not only the advocacy here—Alberta does not have a pharmacare program either. We would appreciate their advocacy in talking to their cousins in Alberta on this important issue.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Final supplementary?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** My question was about universal access. When people get the medication they need, we all agree it saves lives, but the Liberals have left Ontarians waiting and waiting and waiting even longer for the drug coverage that they need. Pharmacare isn't something that people should be waiting for. New Democrats get that and we're ready to do something about it.

Why don't the Liberals get it?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** So, Mr. Speaker, it's clear. Our government's position on access to medicines is crystal clear. For many years now, we have pointed out the fact that one out of 10 Canadians and probably one out of 10 or more Ontario families are unable to access the medicines that they need because of financial limitations. That's not right, and that's why we have so strongly advocated for increasing that access, why we continue to advocate for it, and we take measures like we did last year: 170,000 more seniors that no longer have to pay a \$100 deductible, no longer pay that \$6 copayment. It's

now \$2. These are the kinds of measures, but I appreciate—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Member from Ancaster, come to order.

Wrap-up sentence.

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** Just that I'm glad the NDP has come to the table. We need their help as we continue to improve access to medicines.

## LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Section 20.1 of the Local Health System Integration Act, 2006, prohibits local LHINs from restricting or preventing individuals from receiving services based on the geographical area in which they live. I've been assured by numerous senior sources of both my local LHIN in my riding as well as ministry staff that LHIN boundaries would never prevent or interfere with one's right to access decent and proper health care in this province.

Speaker, is the minister aware of any deviations from this specific policy?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** Well, clearly the member opposite has one, and I'm going to hear about it in the supplementary.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's important to reiterate to this House, as well as to Ontarians, that at least in his first question, what the member opposite has stated is true, that there are no boundaries in terms of access to medicine. So an individual, perhaps, who resides in Thunder Bay is welcome to access the health services that are available in SickKids hospital or Ottawa civic hospital; there are no restrictions for any type of health care service that is provided.

I'm interested in the supplementary; I suspect I'm going to hear of a concern. I'm going to pre-empt, to some degree, the member opposite by saying that I want to work with you, because that is not permitted in this province. Let's find a way to address it effectively.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary? The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Adington.

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** You're absolutely correct, Minister. We do have an example. On April 21, the Ottawa Hospital sent out this memo informing doctors in my riding that the department of medical imaging's breast imaging program is experiencing significant delays. Their solution, as outlined in the memo, would be that they will only accept patients from the Champlain LHIN region. This prevents people in my riding from going to Ottawa to get necessary services. It is in direct conflict with the minister's statement, and it's in direct contradiction to the legislation.

Speaker, will the minister direct the Champlain LHIN and the Ottawa Hospital to accept patients from outside their LHIN and contact the doctors in my riding and

assure them that this memo is false and has no effect? If I could have a page take the memo over—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. Minister?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** I'm delighted to receive this information, and I look forward to seeing the memo.

Frankly, I kind of like it, as well, when members ask to speak with me directly or grab me at the end of question period and solve a problem, but I appreciate that there might be an ambition to score a political point at the same time.

I'm interested, Mr. Speaker, in solving problems. I think almost every member on that side of the Legislature knows, or even has personal experience of, how hard I've worked with them to try to improve, augment or correct health services in their jurisdictions. That's the way I work as health minister.

I'm happy to work on this particular issue. I know we've dramatically expanded breast cancer screening services across this province under the previous health minister, who's sitting to my left. I anticipate that those services are available over a wide swath of that region, but I'm going to look into it specifically.

## EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Premier. Late last week, the government quietly announced that it had approved a massive increase in the salary ranges for OPG executives. The top salary of the OPG CEO is now \$3.8 million, which is double his current salary. Meanwhile, starting next week, ratepayers who have been unable to pay their hydro bills will start losing their electricity. How does the Premier explain to families who may lose their electricity why they have to pay more to give an OPG CEO a 100% increase in salary?

1110

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** Once again, when it comes to OPG salaries, Mr. Speaker, we do have a framework in place to ensure that they are paid comparatively and fairly. When we have people running our nuclear facilities and having a 40-year history of safety, we want to ensure that these people are paid not at the top, not at the bottom, but paid right in the middle of the pack within their sector.

When it comes to looking at rates that are happening for folks right across the province, I was pleased to hear last week that the Ontario Energy Board's decision will begin to lower rates even further on May 1, in anticipation of our government's fair hydro plan. That's going to mean that on May 1, the OEB's decision will have rates reduced by 17% by May 1.

While the opposition parties have, like, a pamphlet for their plan, we're acting.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Again to the Premier: It's not surprising that a Premier who thinks ratepayers should pay twice as much for the OPG CEO also thinks ratepayers should pay twice as much for hydro. The

connection between skyrocketing hydro CEO salaries and skyrocketing hydro disconnections could not be clearer. It speaks to the values of this government, which treats hydro ratepayers as cash cows for senior executives, for private financiers and for other friends of the Premier, at the same time dismissing the struggles of ordinary Ontarians—until, of course, this government is backed into a political corner.

Why does the Premier always put the interests of the executive class ahead of the needs of ordinary Ontario families? Why?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** I'm very pleased to rise and talk about how this Premier and this government are putting the needs of Ontarians first, Mr. Speaker, not on the last page of their plan like the third party. We're making sure that First Nations' delivery charges are addressed; they don't even mention First Nations when it comes to offering help. This Premier and this government—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Finish, please.

**Hon. Glenn Thibeault:** When it comes to the Ontario Electricity Support Program, we increased that by 50%, ensuring that families and individuals who are struggling when it comes to their electricity prices will receive more help. That is what this Premier and this government do. On that side of the House, they have no plan and they can't even make up a plan that works.

## HOUSING POLICY

**Mrs. Cristina Martins:** My question is to the Minister of Finance. It's no secret that the housing market in the greater Golden Horseshoe has experienced dramatic price increases in recent months. We have all seen the stories reporting that housing prices in Toronto are up 33% from this time last year. But, Mr. Speaker, while our hot housing market is tied to the confidence people have in the Ontario economy, we know that many are struggling with housing affordability.

In my own riding of Davenport, I've heard from so many hard-working young families about the difficulty that they are having entering the housing market, so just last week I was so proud to stand by the Premier as she, along with yourself and the Minister of Housing, announced the introduction of Ontario's Fair Housing Plan. Mr. Speaker, this announcement was wonderful news for the constituents in my riding of Davenport, who are working so hard every day to purchase a safe and affordable place to call home.

Could the minister please share with my constituents and all the members of this House what this plan—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** I appreciate the member from Davenport, who attended that press conference and has

been advocating and fighting, not only supporting those who are renting and who are being subject to valuations beyond their control, but also trying to advocate for young families to get a starter home, enabling them to get some equity built in their homes. Given the spike and great increase year over year that has occurred, she has been advocating, alongside this caucus, to find ways to temper the marketplace, by going after those speculators with deep pockets who are crowding out those very families that are trying to get a start.

I congratulate her, our team and our caucus for finding ways to cool the market to ensure that everybody has a better chance.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mrs. Cristina Martins:** Thank you to the minister for his answer. I know that my constituents in my riding of Davenport were also excited to hear that Ontario is also proposing to expand rent control as part of the fair housing plan. This is an issue I've had the pleasure to write to the Ministry of Housing about previously, most recently in February.

Minister, as you are aware, many tenants across the GTA, including in my riding of Davenport, have been faced with unacceptable rent increases. In one case, tenants in the south end of my riding received a shock when the rent on their two-bedroom condo nearly doubled, from \$1,660 a month to \$3,320 a month. With so many of my constituents in Davenport and right across the greater Golden Horseshoe living in rental housing, it is so important for our government to let those people know that economic evictions are unacceptable.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please tell the members of this House—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Minister?

**Hon. Charles Sousa:** Minister of Housing.

**Hon. Chris Ballard:** Thank you to the member for her question. She has indeed been a tireless advocate on this important issue. We've heard stories of unreasonable and shocking rental hikes in today's market, stories like Pauline's, who lives in Toronto and told me that she's fearful that her family will be forced out of their condominium due to an unreasonable rent hike.

Stories like Pauline and her family's are why we introduced the Rental Fairness Act yesterday in the House. If passed, our bill will expand rent controls to all private rental units, including those built after 1999. In addition, this bill includes a suite of other measures that protect tenants. By passing this bill, a quarter of a million people would be protected from unreasonable rent hikes. Whether you're a senior on a fixed income or a young person just starting off, all Ontarians deserve rent that's affordable.

## HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** To the Minister of Health: The health of Ontario's hospitals is suffering from a critical lack of funding. Cornwall Community Hospital's occu-

pancy rates are so high that patients have to be accommodated in hallways, empty office spaces or any cubbyhole that staff can find. Yet ministry people dismiss the concern, saying that the real number really happens at midnight.

Would this minister really stand next to a senior heart attack patient in a stretcher in the hallway and tell them that they really only count if they're still alive at midnight?

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** As the member opposite knows, we have made substantial new investments in our hospitals on two fronts. On the operating side, we've increased operating budgets by about 3% this year alone—close to \$500 million. On the capital side, we've made what I'm confident is the largest, most substantial capital investment in hospitals in this province's history: \$12 billion over a 10-year period.

We're seeing the results of both of those actions—in many cases, quite dramatic increases in hospitals' operating budgets. We reference the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes: Her hospital, the Haliburton hospital was getting a 10% increase in the operating budget last year. These are important investments.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Back to the minister: Cornwall Community Hospital reported occupancy rates as high as 138% this year, with a high incidence of alternative-level-of-care patients facing the longest wait times in Ontario for proper placement.

Yet, when questioned, the government says they have twice as many beds as they need until 2030. Someone doesn't know what's going on, and it isn't the waiting patients. Minister, if, as your figures say, we have too many beds, then why are the ALC patients in Cornwall waiting over a year to be placed?

**1120**

**Hon. Eric Hoskins:** Mr. Speaker, I feel like perhaps it's a two-part answer that is required here.

When it comes to Cornwall Community Hospital itself, I'm proud to say that we increased their operating budget by over \$4 million last year. That was a 5.4% increase in the operating budget for that hospital alone.

When it comes to long-term care and ensuring that residents of Cornwall and the surrounding region have a place to live, since coming into office, we have built more than 10,000 brand-new, long-term-care beds; we're redeveloping an additional 30,000 beds between now and 2025.

But we're also looking at other opportunities to ensure, whether it's in the home, in the community, in long-term care or in the hospital, patients and clients are getting the highest quality of care at the best possible place for them and where they want to be.

## EMPLOYMENT

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** My question is to the Premier. After nearly 14 years of Liberal government, for far too many hard-working Ontarians good-paying, full-time

jobs are a thing of the past. What have they been left with from this Liberal government? Worries, Mr. Speaker; worries about how they're going to pay their bills, their hydro, their rent; worries about how they're going to make a good future for their kids.

Now the Changing Workplaces Review is in. What are you waiting for? Where's the action? Not the talk; where is the action from this government to implement some changes for the people of this province?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** The member must be a Maple Leafs fan because he knows a bandwagon when he sees one.

We've been working very, very hard at this. We want every family in this province to benefit from the growing economy, but even as we create those new jobs, we need to be aware that the world of work is changing and with these changes come new challenges.

We're addressing these concerns head-on through the Changing Workplaces Review. As the Premier said yesterday, it's more about just protecting people's wages and their ability to earn a good living. What we're doing is creating a framework for an economy that focuses on decency for workers and fairness for those families. Ontario workers need us to get this done right, not just quickly.

The NDP called this process a waste of time. I couldn't disagree more. Workers in the province of Ontario couldn't disagree more.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** If this was a hockey game, this government would get a penalty for delay of game.

Too many Ontarians have reached the tipping point. That's why New Democrats have committed to a \$15 minimum wage, to an easier path to the middle class through unionization, to the same pay for the same work for people working through a temporary job agency, to drug coverage for all Ontarians. We want hard-working Ontarians to be lifted out of poverty, not to be stuck in it.

What is the Premier going to do today not for her friends but for the hard-working Ontarians of this province who have been under this government's rule for 14 years? What is she going to do for them today? We need action now.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Thank you to the member for the question. We've made sure that the province of Ontario follows a very consistent, predictable and impartial process when it comes to a minimum wage increase in Ontario. Contrast that to between 1996 and 2003 when the party opposite froze the minimum wage for seven years at \$6.85.

Since then, since 2003, we've increased the minimum wage by more than 70%. What we did is, we went out and consulted with organized labour, consulted with business and consulted with poverty advocates. We consulted with anybody who had an interest in the healthy economy of this province. We've got a predictable system in place. We're having an increase this year, as we have year after year after year.

Speaker, if this was a football game, the NDP fumbled the football.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Start the clock.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Order, please. New question?

## BASIC INCOME

**Mr. Ted McMeekin:** Before I ask my important question, I just want to take a minute as a cancer survivor to thank the cancer society, which is here today, for doing such great work all across Ontario.

Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Our government has always taken a leadership role in exploring creative and innovative ways to reduce poverty and support people living on low incomes.

In the 2016 budget, our government committed to testing how a basic income might help people on low incomes better meet their basic needs while improving their education, employment and health. Yesterday morning, I was thrilled to host the Premier and the Ministers of Housing and Community and Social Services in Hamilton when the Premier announced details of Ontario's basic income pilot.

I understand a plan for the pilot builds on feedback, so Speaker, I want to know, through you: Can the minister please tell members of this House more about Ontario's basic income pilot?

**Hon. Helena Jaczek:** Thank you very much to the member for his long-time championing of this very interesting idea.

The basic income pilot will be testing a new approach to income support in a careful, step-by-step way to ensure we get it right. We're starting small, using the lessons learned as we build the pilot out in further phases. Our ultimate goal is to better understand whether this approach could help people living on low incomes in their everyday lives.

Beginning later this spring, the three-year pilot will launch in two regions: Hamilton, including Brantford and Brant county; and Thunder Bay and the surrounding area. A third location, Lindsay, will be added in the fall. Up to 4,000 participants will be included in the pilot across the three sites at full implementation.

As I said yesterday, I am pleased that I'm not going to be losing anything from my social assistance budget as we move forward into this important project.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Ted McMeekin:** Thank you to the minister.

My constituents were excited to hear the news yesterday. They know that though Ontario's economy is in a relatively strong position, many people in the province are not feeling that growth in their everyday lives. People are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living and facing precarious employment with little job

security or benefits. Ontario's basic income pilot will be, I think, a great opportunity to study whether a basic income can better support vulnerable workers and give people the security and opportunity they need to achieve their potential.

Will the minister tell us more about this innovative pilot project, including who will be eligible to participate and how much support they will receive?

**Hon. Helena Jaczek:** Minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

**Hon. Chris Ballard:** Thank you to the member for his tireless advocacy on behalf of the most vulnerable across Ontario.

The basic income pilot will help us test ways to make everyday life easier for Ontarians by removing barriers that still stand in the way of improved health, employment and housing for too many among us. Study participants will be randomly selected, 18 to 64 years old, living in one of the selected test locations for the past 12 months or longer and living on a low income.

We're using a tax credit model. The Ontario basic income pilot will ensure participants receive just under \$17,000 a year for a single person, less 50% of any earned income; just over \$24,000 a year for a couple, again, less 50% of any earned income; and up to an additional \$6,000 a year for a person with a disability.

Testing a basic income model—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. Sorry. New question.

## LABOUR DISPUTE

**Ms. Laurie Scott:** My question is to the minister responsible for accessibility. The Canadian Hearing Society provides vital services to tens of thousands of culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing persons across Ontario. Unfortunately, an unresolved labour dispute at CHS has brought their important work to a halt for over six weeks now, which is having a damaging impact on the lives of deaf individuals in our province.

For example, many seniors who cannot hear are literally shut in their homes in isolation while also dealing with chronic health conditions. These are life-and-death situations.

1130

My question to the minister is, what is the government doing to protect the deaf community in this situation and what backup measures have they put in place to ensure that the Ontario deaf community isn't falling through the cracks?

**Hon. Tracy MacCharles:** I want to thank the member opposite from the PC Party for this question. It's important. I have met with this group on many occasions and have received the recent correspondence as well. They are strong advocates for the deaf community in Durham and beyond. They do fantastic work and they are pushing forward on a number of fronts, including visual smoke detectors.

I know the Minister of Labour will comment in the supplementary on the labour issues, but I do want to acknowledge the work—I think I have a meeting upcoming with them as well, so we can talk about these issues and coordinate our efforts with the Ministry of Labour.

Thank you for raising the question, and the Minister of Labour will respond to the labour issues.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary? The member from Thornhill.

**Mrs. Gila Martow:** My question is also to the minister of accessibility. Members of the Canadian Hearing Society have been on strike since March 6 and are demonstrating in front of the ministry today. Recently, Kevin Hanit from Thornhill sent an email to the hearing society on Spadina to request repairs to his hearing aids. The return email told him that he will be put on a wait-list until the strike is over.

This is a vulnerable community whose lives have been put on hold. Will the minister please tell us what she is doing to ensure that Ontarians who require sign-language translators, hearing tests and hearing aid repairs are not left in silence?

**Hon. Tracy MacCharles:** Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** I appreciate the question and I appreciate the member opposite showing her support for the parties that are involved in this negotiation. I also have talked to members of the third party on this.

During a labour dispute, what the government does is it focuses on assisting the parties to get them back to the table. It's a shared responsibility. We've got some of the best mediators in the country who work right here at the province of Ontario. We've had somebody in; we've had somebody involved with the parties. We remain available to assist them, to bring them back to the bargaining table.

What we're doing is we're encouraging the employer and the employees in this case, and the union, to make every effort to resolve those differences, to bring them back to the table. We're confident that if they work together, these parties can reach a settlement. We have a strong history in the province of Ontario of resolving these differences without strikes or lockouts—almost 99%. In this case, we need to do a little bit more work, and we will.

## CHILD CARE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. Premier, parents, families and advocates know that we don't have a child care system in Ontario. What we have is a crisis. We don't have affordable fees for families. We don't have decent work or pay for educators. We don't have enough quality not-for-profit child care spaces. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care said, "We need every dollar of this child care expansion going to our kids. There is simply no room for profit."

When there is a political crisis, that's when this government wakes up. Unfortunately, they were too late on the hydro crisis and they were too late on the housing

crisis. What will it take for this Liberal government to wake up to the child care crisis in this province?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister responsible for early learning and child care.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Minister responsible for children and youth services.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** No, early years.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Early years.

**Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris:** I want to thank the member opposite for this question. Now, I understand that the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care was here today to talk about child care in the province. Absolutely, creating a safe and healthy environment and giving our kids the best start in life is the most important thing we can do. Our plan is to transform the way that child care is delivered in this province—

*Interruption.*

**Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris:** —and it's great to see a young Ontarian in the House today with us.

We are here, really, as voices for parents and families. We know that for parents, finding an infant, toddler or preschool child care spot can be very challenging. We know the current capacity isn't there. That's why we're committing to build 100,000 new spaces and transform the way we're delivering child care in the province.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Premier, families cannot wait any longer. Parents face the highest child care costs in Canada. Child care fees in Ontario cost 50% more than undergraduate tuition in the province; 24% of the ECEs who are here today make less than \$15 an hour.

We know that public and not-for-profit child care spaces provide the highest quality, but this government won't commit to building a system based on quality. For 14 years, families have waited as costs have risen and wait-lists have grown. They cannot wait any longer. When will Ontario see a quality, affordable, accessible child care system that puts children ahead of profit?

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Minister of early years and child care—I apologize.

**Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris:** Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to say that we are transforming the way we deliver child care in this province, absolutely. We are currently working on a five-year rollout plan, which is under development. What we're committing to do is to create accessible, affordable, responsive, quality spaces. What we have done is gone across the province holding consultations with thousands of people. We're now in the process of making sure that our plan is good and strong.

The third party does a lot of talking, but the bottom line is, even in their recent vision statement, child care was only one paragraph of what they put out as part of their plan. There were no timelines. There were no funding numbers. We actually have done our homework, and we're getting ready to ensure that we create space for 100,000 new children in childcare in this province.

## FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Mr. Mike Colle:** My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Minister, as you know, last week the government south of the border attacked our dairy farmers and our dairy industry. This week, they're attacking our forest industry and our forestry workers. Many Ontarians are very concerned about what's happening, and they're wondering what the impact of these new exorbitant tariffs and duties threatened by the States will do to our workers in softwood lumber exports and in this industry.

What action is our government taking to stand up to the abusive imposition of tariffs and these attacks on our dairy industry and, especially, on our forestry industry?

**Hon. Kathryn McGarry:** I'd like to thank the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for his question. I am disappointed that the US government has decided to impose unreasonable duties, putting unnecessary financial pressure on Ontario's lumber producers and manufacturers. We believe that fair and open trade is the best outcome for consumers on both sides of the border.

Our government is standing alongside our forestry sector and the families that depend upon it. Our government has been working with various partners to increase the amount of Ontario wood used in large-scale building construction across the province.

That's not all, Speaker. I'm also proud to say that we've just provided \$10 million in additional funding to the forestry industry to reimburse costs for road construction and maintenance on public-access roads. Ontario is standing alongside our forestry sector to protect the well-paying jobs and important economic benefits that this sector provides for workers and their families.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Thank you, Minister, for your response. As you know, many small communities throughout Ontario depend on jobs in the forestry sector. I don't have to tell you that. I think we need to all stand together in saying this is not acceptable.

Therefore, on behalf of not only the workers in the forestry sector, but everybody in Ontario who is worried about these arbitrary increases in tariffs and what they're going to do to jobs in this important industry, I wonder what concrete steps the ministry has taken and will take to ensure we don't let them get away with this?

**Hon. Kathryn McGarry:** I appreciate the member's concern over this important issue. Our \$15.5-billion forestry sector plays a significant role in 230 communities across Ontario and in the management of Ontario's boreal forests in support of climate change initiatives, which is why we recently hired our chief negotiator, former federal trade minister Jim Peterson. Jim will help to advocate for free and open trade for Ontario's softwood industry.

In Canada, negotiating trade deals is the responsibility of the federal government. That's why we're asking the federal government to listen to the Ontario and Quebec forestry industries and create a loan guarantee program. I

have met with Ministers Carr and Freeland many times on this issue.

1140

We cannot let the unpredictability of our southern neighbour affect the jobs and well-being of people here in Ontario. As we defend against this unfair decision, we'll support our industry partners, responding to their concerns and vigorously representing their industry in Ottawa and Washington.

## NORTHERN ECONOMY

**Mr. Norm Miller:** My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In the three years' worth of public polling your government tabled quietly in February, one poll by the Ministry of Finance found that 65% of northern Ontarians were very concerned and 29% were concerned about their local economies. In total, 94% of northerners are concerned or very concerned about their local economies.

Does the minister agree that developing the Ring of Fire will boost the northern economy and alleviate some of these concerns?

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** Thank you to the member for the question. Maybe I'll deal with the Ring of Fire piece in the supplementary. Maybe I'll start by just talking about the difference in the level of support that has come from this government to the municipal sector, as opposed to the level of support that did not come from the opposition Conservatives when they were in government from 1995 to 2003.

It is very clear and it is very obvious to the municipal sector right across the province of Ontario—not just in northern Ontario—that the financial assistance that has flowed through a variety of programs from this government, starting in 2003, has better positioned businesses right across northern Ontario and has better positioned local resident taxpayers when it comes to the communities that they live in.

No thanks to the work that went on with eight years of no support from a Conservative government, but tremendous support through a variety of programs from this Liberal government since 2003. Those programs are in place, those programs continue, and local taxpayers are better positioned as a result.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I guess the minister didn't hear my question: 94% of northerners are concerned about their local economies. That's very disturbing.

Northern Ontarians need this government to do something to give them some hope. Mining, especially the Ring of Fire, offers that hope. This government has made lots of promises but delivered very little on this file. This government has more than once announced funding for transportation infrastructure in the Ring of Fire region.

My question, Mr. Speaker: Would the minister please tell us how many dollars have been spent on transportation infrastructure in the Ring of Fire region, and when

can we expect to see the physical evidence of some actual work being done?

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** Speaker, when it comes to support for northern communities, you just heard the minister—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Zero and never, thank you very much.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock. You were doing so well.

**Hon. Bill Mauro:** Speaker, when it comes to support for northern communities and businesses based in northern Ontario, you just heard the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry run down quite a significant laundry list of supports that we have put in place to help 230 communities in northern Ontario that rely on the forest industry, like bringing back forestry roads programs that were downloaded by both the previous opposition parties: the NDP when they were in government and the Conservatives when they were in government.

Specifically on the mining sector, the member knows—they want to focus on one project. That's fine. They want to try and score a few political points. You want to talk about mining? Perhaps the member opposite can speak to why New Gold has just operated a mine four hours west of Thunder Bay: 600 people on a construction site; 450 people who will remain employed in that operation once it's open.

Mining is continuing to move forward. They want to focus on the one project. It's doing very well. Exploration is up—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question?

## LABOUR DISPUTE

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** My question is to the Premier. Workers at the Canadian Hearing Society are now entering their seventh week off the job. That's seven weeks that people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing are not getting the support they need to thrive.

The result: People like Paul in Sudbury, who had been forced to tell his father that he's going to die, to sign to him that he's going to die, rather than be able to simply hold his hand during his final moments.

Speaker, workers at the Canadian Hearing Society are here today, along with allies, fighting to have their work valued. Does the Premier agree that it's time for the employer and the union, through a third party, to get these issues dealt with and let these workers get back to serving a vulnerable community?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Thank you to the member for that question. I know the member opposite, more than many in this House, believes in the collective bargaining process. We know if we can get those parties back to the table, using the skilled mediators that we have in the province of Ontario, we can reach an agreement. We always do: 99% of collective bargaining agreements in

the province of Ontario are reached without any lockout, without any strike, without any action at all.

Speaker, we're encouraging the employers and the unions to get back to the table to resolve their differences. It's how it's done in the province of Ontario, and it works in the province of Ontario. As I said to a previous answer, Speaker, almost 99%—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Answer.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Almost 99% of collective agreements are reached without any action. Last year, we had 18 work stoppages in the province of Ontario. But compare that to the average—

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you.

Final supplementary?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Again to the Premier: While this government constantly passes the puck on their responsibilities to protect workers and vulnerable populations, they have done nothing to rein in executive salaries at taxpayer-funded organizations.

The CHS receives more than \$20 million for services from the province each year. Unfortunately, a large portion of this has gone to exorbitant wage increases for top executives, including a 75% increase for the CEO in just three years. All the while, front-line staff, many of whom are deaf or hard-of-hearing themselves, haven't had a wage increase since their contract expired four years ago.

I invite the Premier to join me, workers, and allies at the rally today to support the workers of the Canadian Hearing Society and recognize the importance of their service to the community. Will the Premier finally give vulnerable populations the respect and attention they deserve?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** We've got a very highly skilled mediation team, a conciliation team, in the province of Ontario that I think is second to none. It's got a tremendous record for helping to resolve disputes such as this. We've been involved with the parties—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** If you think it's over, it doesn't necessarily mean I can't warn you or name you.

Finish, please.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** My job as the Minister of Labour is to be impartial and to ensure that we're doing everything we possibly can to bring these parties back to the table. We don't like strikes. We don't like to see lockouts. We don't like to see people not receiving the services. Last year, Speaker, 18 work stoppages; when the NDP were in power—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Windsor West is warned.

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** —139 work stoppages, Speaker.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** No questions.

## CORRECTION OF RECORD

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The Minister of Housing on a point of order.

**Hon. Chris Ballard:** Yes, a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd just like to correct my record. Ontario's new fair housing plan will expand rent controls to all private rental units, including those built after 1991.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you.

## VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The member from Ottawa South on a point of order.

**Mr. John Fraser:** A point of order: I'd like to welcome Ron Clifton, board director with the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, and Byron James from the Canadian Cancer Society. Both are from Ottawa. Welcome to the Legislature.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The minister responsible for women's issues.

**Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris:** I'd like to welcome Catherine Smallegange. She is a guest of page Kenna Smallegange and is here in the public gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

## NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning high occupancy rates at a community hospital. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming, from Peel Planning Groups, Brett Paveling and Jamie Curran, who are in the members' gallery today.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** Thank you. Welcome.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### CULBERT'S BAKERY

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** For 140 years, Culbert's Bakery has been a local fixture on Goderich's West Street, offering everything from breads and cake to

muffins, pies and tarts to locals and visitors alike as they head down to the harbour and the beautiful west coast.

Built in 1877 by David Cantelon, the bakery was later purchased by the Culbert family in 1942. Co-owner Darin Culbert is the third generation to work in the shop. He is up each morning at 1 a.m. to begin the day's baking. His son Evan is the fourth generation of Culberts to work there, and he's been learning the ropes at his father's side so that one day he can take over the reins himself.

Famous for their cream puffs and their doughnuts, the bakery also offers the Canada cupcake for Canada Day weekend. All of this is baked in the store's original brick oven, which was installed in 1881.

Such a fixture is this family business and its baked goods that not even the F3 tornado in 2011 could deflate their spirits. In fact, despite the tornado shattering the bakery for just under one year and actually putting out the oven's fire, which had burned non-stop for more than a century, the team rallied together and opened their doors just 10 months later, after making the necessary repairs.

It was interesting; the Culbert family thought about closing their doors, but after customers were lined up outside at 6 o'clock in the morning on the first day that they reopened, it put all doubts aside.

It's a great place to stop when you're in Goderich.

## HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I rise today to speak about the very serious problem that is impacting Ontario seniors and thousands of workers across the province. As the NDP critic for seniors, home care and long-term care, I am closely watching how the vast changes stemming from Bills 41 and 89 will impact our seniors and community caregivers. So it is highly concerning that the language that protected public dollars from going to for-profit companies was conspicuously absent from both of these bills.

If this government genuinely believes in our public health care system, why did it deliberately remove the very language that protects our health care dollars from going to profit? Yesterday, when I asked the question of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, he indicated that he had placed a moratorium on CCAC contracts for community care. I found that response highly troubling, as the minister had promised to address the failing through regulations. You made the promise to stakeholders who have urged you to protect non-profit services, and you reneged.

It's quite clear to me, to my NDP colleagues and to Ontario's seniors what the Wynne Liberals' intentions are: You plan to privatize community support services so you can help your Liberal friends to set up for-profit agencies and make money off the backs of seniors who depend on community support services.

It's time for this government to stop playing "we know best" with people's lives and stop rigging the system for profits.

## FEDERATION OF CANADIAN TURKISH ASSOCIATIONS

**Ms. Sophie Kiwala:** I'd like to extend a warm welcome—*hos geldiniz*—to the members of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations, the FCTA, to Queen's Park.

This past weekend, members of the FCTA, along with legislators, councillors, community leaders and, of course, children, gathered in the community at the Macedonian community centre to celebrate the multi-cultural children's day festival. Children from a variety of different ethnic communities gathered in traditional dress to sing songs, share culture and perform their national folk dances.

Having lived in Turkey for several years prior to my election as an MPP, I had the incredible opportunity to experience first-hand the vibrancy of the Turkish culture and to see what a special day this is for the Turkish community.

I'm honoured to rise today to recognize April 23 as a day dedicated to the Turkish children who symbolize the future of a new nation—a tradition that began on April 23, 1920—and laid the foundation for the republic.

Recognized by the United Nations and celebrated around the world, this day is an opportunity to see children from diverse communities come together and celebrate their differences—a lesson we might all learn from.

I would like to extend a warm thank you to the FCTA and the Turkic Assembly of Canada for bringing Toronto's diverse communities together in celebration of International Children's Day. Thank you. *Tesekkür ederim.*

## ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Speaker, today I want to highlight the excellent work of the Think team in Perth-Wellington. The Think team is a group of high school students who are educating people about important health issues, including tobacco use. One of their current campaigns is to build awareness around the issue of actors smoking in movies.

Research shows that cigarette smoking in movies can strongly influence kids to start smoking. Here is an alarming statistic: In 2009, there were over 1.1 billion tobacco impressions made on moviegoers in Canadian theatres during youth-related films. The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimates that 185,000 of today's children and teens will start smoking because of exposure to smoking in movies.

The Think team is calling for a simple but powerful change: They want to see new movies with actors smoking receive an 18A rating. This could have a great impact

on the well-being of our kids. It would help take the glamour and “cool” factor out of smoking onscreen.

I had the pleasure of hosting a few members of the Think team at my constituency office in February. Nicki Van Bakel and Rachel Klaver are both high school students in my riding, and Lyndsay O’Donnell is the youth engagement coordinator with the Perth District Health Unit.

On March 6 I tabled a petition from the Think team that makes a strong case for change and requests that the Standing Committee on Government Agencies look at this issue.

I hope this government will take the Think team’s advice and move to address this important issue.

#### DAIRY INDUSTRY AND FOREST INDUSTRY

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Over the last week or a little bit longer there have been several announcements made by the American administration that could have and have had severe repercussions in my riding and across Ontario.

The first was President Trump’s remarks regarding the dairy industry. Hopefully the administration will realize that our dairy industry is not the threat to the American industry that he believes it is.

The second, now that the Americans have put a 20% duty on Canadian softwood, has the potential to hurt our industry severely, and the fact that this duty is retroactive is extremely punitive.

We stand with the Canadian government. I believe everyone in this Legislature stands with the Canadian government and with the Canadian negotiators to ensure that they put on a solid force to maintain our free and fair trade environment with the Americans.

We have enjoyed a good trading relationship. It has had its bumps over the years, but we have had a good trading relationship. We need to maintain that trading relationship; and we need to ensure that it is a fair trading relationship for all sides. I believe we have that, and we need to maintain it.

#### GRANDVIEW CHILDREN’S CENTRE

**Mr. Joe Dickson:** Grandview Children’s Centre has plans for a \$50-million multi-storey centre for pediatric expertise to be built in Ajax, for over 5,600 children.

I had a lengthy telephone conversation with former MPP and long-serving Pickering mayor Wayne Arthurs this week and his wife, Susan. One of Wayne and Susan’s children had audiology issues and attended Grandview until he aged out—I was there with Wayne, over 12 years ago, before 2006.

1510

In March 2015, MPP MacCharles and I, MPP Anderson, MPP French, former MPP Christine Elliott, now Ontario’s first patient advocate, and MPP Scott wrote our always helpful Premier, Kathleen Wynne, and the Minister of Finance, Charles Sousa, in support of the Grandview

Children’s Centre expansion. MPP Coe is new in Ms. Elliott’s riding and also very supportive.

Granville Anderson and I were with the Honourable Tracy MacCharles when she presented an \$850,000 commitment. Her own son was a client of Grandview, so she knew first-hand of their great work.

In November 2015, Ajax mayor Steve Parish and Ajax council announced the granting of a five-acre parcel of land in north Ajax.

I was also proud when I announced the very first Ontario government half-million-dollar capital grant for this planning site redevelopment, in 2007.

The Grandview finance committee and their volunteers are just a fraction over an \$8-million shortfall, waiting for the announcement from pre-existing committed financial donors.

Thank you for the dedication of the CEO, Lorraine Sunstrum-Mann; awesome senior adviser Donna McFarlane; as always, Grandview foundation chair Bryan Yetman; and, of course, board chair Judy Robinson.

We await the 2017 budget or later—and as Yogi Berra once said, “It ain’t over till it’s over.” We will be here for you always.

#### HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I rise to address a concern to Leeds-Grenville residents and tens of thousands of motorists travelling Highway 401 through my riding daily. We all know highway construction is necessary, but it’s critical to plan work to minimize disruption to motorists and the movement of goods key to our economy while ensuring public safety.

I’m hearing MTO’s planning is off course on a bridge repair project on the 401 at Highway 137. As one constituent wrote, “It’s been two weeks and the traffic on our quiet rural road has been unbelievable.” This is just a taste of the real chaos I fear could arrive when the busy summer tourist season begins.

The issues aren’t just inconvenience and public safety: Highway 137 leads to the Thousand Islands Bridge, a vital economic link between Canada and the US. Each year, 340,000 commercial and 1.5 million non-commercial vehicles cross the bridge. More than \$1 billion in trade crosses both ways each month. Unnecessary 401 delays puts this trade and the jobs it supports at risk.

The work is necessary, but the Minister of Transportation can act to reduce the problems. He can start by working with the OPP and municipalities to improve the traffic management plan, and he can demand all contractors involved put their full resources into the project to get it done faster.

#### SIKH COMMUNITY

**Mr. Harinder S. Takhar:** Everyone has contributed to the growth of our province and our country. April being Sikh Heritage Month in Ontario, I would like to state some of the contributions that the Sikh community

has made. Initiatives such as the Seva Food Bank in my riding of Mississauga—Erindale, a Sikh-hosted radiothon on CJMR 1320 for the town of Fort McMurray, and numerous efforts to raise funds for hospitals and charitable causes express the Sikh principle of selfless giving.

Canadian Sikhs are represented in all sectors of our economy. They became a force in the logging industry, construction and land development fields, as well as farming, in British Columbia. In Ontario, the Sikh community is well represented in our transportation industry, in information technology and in other businesses such as manufacturing, retail and construction. Many Sikhs can be heard on the radio and seen on TV programs. There are, in fact, more Punjabi-language papers in Canada than in India.

Sikhs have bravely defended our nation since World War I, including the iconic Buckam Singh, who was wounded in action twice and now rests in the Mount Hope Cemetery in Kitchener.

Sikhs have also contributed politically and represented their constituents at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. Some also have had the honour of serving as ministers.

We are very proud of our Sikh community and their outstanding contribution to our great province and country.

### DAFFODIL DAYS

**Mr. Jeff Yurek:** I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Daffodil Days. The yellow daffodil has become a symbol of strength, courage and support for those fighting all types of cancer. The first-ever Daffodil Day was held in 1957, when volunteers took to the streets to sell daffodil plants to raise money for cancer research. The occasion has since extended to a monthly awareness campaign which occurs every year in April.

The money raised from Daffodil Days allows the Canadian Cancer Society to fund leading-edge cancer research and provide service supports to patients and their families.

Statistics show that two in five Canadians will develop cancer in their lifetime, while one in four will die from the disease. Cancer rates increase with age and are more common in males than females. In 2016, 89% of all cancers were diagnosed in Canadians aged 50 years and over, while 44% were in people aged 70 and older.

Females tend to have higher rates of cancer than males between the ages of 20 to 59 due to their increased risk of breast and thyroid cancer.

We must not forget that children's cancer needs its own enhanced research and support.

I'd like to thank the Canadian Cancer Society for starting one of the most successful, well-known disease awareness months and for all of their fundraising initiatives that have helped cancer patients and their families since 1938. Thank you very much to the volunteers.

Buy a daffodil; save some lives.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I thank all members for their statements.

### VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** In the House today—normally they would be in the Speaker's gallery, but I didn't get a chance to know he was coming—is our Consul General of Turkey in Toronto, Erdeniz Sen. Welcome, Consul General and assistants. I appreciate you being here.

### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

#### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated April 25, 2017, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

### MOTIONS

#### MINISTER OF HOUSING

**Hon. Marie-France Lalonde:** I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the Minister of Housing.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The minister is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister?

**Hon. Marie-France Lalonde:** I move that the Minister of Housing be permitted to speak while seated during debate on Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.

**The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):** The minister moves that the Minister of Housing be permitted to speak while seated during the debate on Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. Do we agree? Agreed.

*Motion agreed to.*

### PETITIONS

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space;

“Whereas a building condition assessment found the major systems of the hospital will require renewal within the next 10 years;

“Whereas substandard facilities exist in the emergency department; there is no space in the dialysis department to expand, and there is a lack of storage and crowding in many areas of the building; and, structurally, additional floors can't be added to the existing building to accommodate growth;

“Whereas there is no direct connection from the medical device repurposing department to the operating room;

“Whereas there is a lack of quiet rooms, interview rooms and lounge space;

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government immediately provide the necessary funding to Collingwood General and Marine Hospital so that it can build a new hospital to serve the needs of the community.”

I certainly agree with this petition and will sign it.

#### SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** I want to acknowledge two members of Peel Planning Groups who are here today and helped make this petition possible.

The petition is to the government of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas it is unacceptable that in Peel region in the last 36 months more than 33 adults who have a developmental disability have been abandoned by their families; and

“It is unacceptable that individuals who have a developmental disability are cut off from the Special Services at Home funding program when they turn age 18 and therefore have no immediate funding; and

“It is unacceptable that there are 1,105 individuals who have a developmental disability waiting for funding for day supports and respite services. In addition to this, many families who have been fortunate enough to receive Passport funding cannot afford to purchase more than a few days a week worth of support; and

**1520**

“There are more than 65 people on the then existing ‘pressures list’ who have been identified by the Ministry of Community and Social Services as requiring a high level of support, but there is no long-term secure funding available; and

“While the Ministry of Community and Social Services reports that they have provided funding for 800 residential supports across the province that Peel region

only received support for an estimated 12 people and apparently most of these were people already being supported by the ministry”—that is unacceptable.

Further, that “the new funding promised to the community to support an additional 600 adults has been diverted by the ministry to pay for transitional-aged youth for whom the ministry is already responsible; and”

Their “families have to wait years for clinical supports such as psychiatrists, clinical assessments, behavioural supports etc.; and

“Families requiring residential supports have to be in crisis. Families that work within the system and plan for their loved ones’ future are constantly punished by the lack of supports; and

“Families in crisis are being forced to relocate their children out of the Peel region; and

“The Fair Share for Peel historical funding imbalance has never been addressed.”

Therefore, the petition calls upon the Legislative Assembly “to address the funding issues for the region of Peel so that we can help families rebuild and reinstate hope for a quality of life for their family members.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign my name to it.

#### NANJING MASSACRE

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the events in Asian countries during World War II are not well-known;

“Whereas Ontarians have not had an opportunity for a thorough discussion and examination of the World War II atrocities in Asia; ...

“Whereas Ontario is recognized as an inclusive society;

“Whereas Ontario is the home to one of the largest Asian populations in Canada, with over 2.6 million in 2011;

“Whereas some Ontarians have direct relationships with victims and survivors of the Nanjing Massacre, whose stories are untold;

“Whereas the Nanjing Massacre was an atrocity with over 200,000 Chinese civilians and soldiers alike were indiscriminately killed, and tens of thousands of women were sexually assaulted, in the Japanese capture of the city;

“Whereas December 13, 2017, marks the 80th anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre; ...

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, urge the members of the Ontario Legislature to pass Bill 79, declaring Dec. 13 as the Nanjing Massacre Commemorative Day.”

I fully support the 5,000 signatures for you, Mr. Speaker, and give it to page Eesha.

## GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, concerning partisan hydro ads.

“Whereas the government is spending millions of taxpayers’ dollars on advertising that seems to be solely for the purpose of promoting the Liberal government for partisan political purposes; and

“Whereas the government did not feel the need to inform the people of Ontario by advertising any of the many hydro rate increases; and

“Whereas this money could be used to lower hydro costs for people who are choosing between heating their homes and buying essentials such as food; and

“Whereas this money could instead be used to provide health care, keep rural schools open, increase long-term-care beds and other services for the people of Ontario; and

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to call on the government to stop running partisan hydro ads with taxpayers’ money.”

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition, Mr. Speaker.

## GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** I’m pleased to introduce these petitions, with signatures compiled by my friends at the OPSEU We Own It campaign: Rob Wilson, Jordan McGrail, Amanda Picott, Sue Fairweather and Ange Thompson. It reads:

“Whereas Belle River’s privately operated Service-Ontario centre shut down in January 2017 because the second owner in four years has given up operating it; and

“Whereas the government is considering applications to let yet another private owner take over the operation of the centre; and

“Whereas the people of Belle River and surrounding communities have a right to reliable business hours; and

“Whereas the people of Belle River and surrounding communities have a right—where they live—to the full range of services available only at publicly operated centres, in addition to health cards and driver’s licences, such as:

- “—registering a business;
- “—filing Employment Standards Act claims;
- “—submitting Landlord and Tenant Board documents;

- “—entering Ministry of Natural Resources draws; and

“Whereas the closest publicly operated office is 30 minutes away in downtown Windsor; and

“Whereas the residents of Belle River and surrounding areas pay the same provincial taxes as other Ontarians and, therefore, have a right to equal access to quality services; and

“Whereas the only aim of publicly operated centres is to provide the best possible services to the people, while the sole goal of privately operated services is to generate the biggest possible profit for the owner;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services instruct ServiceOntario to immediately and permanently open and staff a public ServiceOntario centre in Belle River.”

I wholeheartedly agree, will affix my signature and give it to Jeremi.

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** My petition is also to the Legislative Assembly from a constituent, Marc Yamaguchi. He’s a great advocate of rain gardens.

“Whereas the electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming an important part of fighting climate change and are becoming more widely adopted in Ontario;

“Whereas advances in landscaping and paving have made ‘green’ driving and parking surfaces more widely available and economical;

“Whereas large cities like Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton are prime areas for EV usage and updates to residential parking upgrades;

“Whereas most cities with urban areas have not yet formally recognized the requirements of EV charging in their planning or permitting;

“Whereas living ecosystems co-exist in low-impact development models and enhance the resilience, biodiversity and small-scale habitat in urban areas;

“Whereas most cities with urban areas do not recognize the most current paving and surfacing technologies—including rain gardens and French drains—in their parking plans;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario amend the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act, encouraging municipalities to ensure that residents purchasing electric vehicles are able to create parking spaces to facilitate charging; that residents creating parking spaces be encouraged to use the most effective green technologies to ensure better drainage of storm water; and that residents be encouraged to incorporate native flora that boost natural resiliency into their parking spacing plans.”

I agree with this petition and I leave it with page Matthew.

## HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas conscience rights for health care providers are not currently” provided and “protected in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Pass legislation providing robust conscience protection for Ontario’s health care providers, for medical aid in dying.”

I’ll affix my signature to this petition and send it to the table with Hayden.

## LONG-TERM CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Joanne Charbonneau from Val Caron, in my riding, for signing this petition. It goes as follows:

“Whereas quality of care for the 77,000 residents of (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into LTC homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to Jeremi to bring it to the table.

## LUNG HEALTH

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further petitions? The member from—this is going to be a big one—Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

**Mr. Ted McMeekin:** Thanks very much, Speaker. It’s the riding with the longest name because our people have big hearts and big hopes.

This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.8 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 390,700 of whom are children and youth between the ages of 0-14 living with asthma;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs...;

Therefore, “We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Ted McMeekin, MPP Jeff Yurek and MPP France Gélinas’ private member’s bill, Bill 71, Lung Health Act, 2016, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

## 1530

“As the bill had already been debated at committee in the bill’s original form,” it’s suggested that it come back and be quickly dealt with in the House.

I have many of these here. This is the only time I’ll read this in the House, because I wouldn’t want to be repetitive, Mr. Speaker.

## APRAXIA

**Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all children in the province of Ontario deserve every opportunity to reach their full potential; and

“Whereas speech and language pathologists in Ontario are afforded the capabilities to provide a diagnosis of childhood apraxia of speech and receive specialized mandated training; and

“Whereas intensive and frequent individualized professional speech therapy, multiple times weekly, is needed to facilitate verbal speech; and

“Whereas school-aged children with severe and significant speech and language disorders like childhood apraxia of speech are not receiving the quality or quantity of speech therapy outlined as essential by current evidence and research, by either CCACs or school boards;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government of Ontario to declare that May 14 is Apraxia Awareness Day.”

I totally agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with Claire.

## WATER EXTRACTION

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** “Protect Water as a Public Good.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas groundwater is a public good, not a commodity; and

“Whereas local ecosystems must be preserved for the well-being of future generations; and

“Whereas the United Nations recognizes access to clean drinking water as a human right; and

“Whereas the duty to consult indigenous communities regarding water-taking within traditional territories is often neglected, resulting in a disproportionate burden on systemically marginalized communities during a period of reconciliation; and

“Whereas a poll commissioned by the Wellington Water Watchers found that two thirds of respondents support phasing out bottled water in Ontario over the course of a decade; and

“Whereas a trend towards prioritizing the expansion of for-profit water bottling corporations over the needs of municipalities will negatively impact Ontario’s growing communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on Premier Wynne to direct the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to prioritize public ownership and con-

trol of water over corporate interests and fund the accessibility of free drinking water in public spaces across the province."

It is my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Hayden.

### WATER FLUORIDATION

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

"Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario's population, including the region of Peel; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing urge support for amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;...

"That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I fully support it and give my petition to Jeremi.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. The time for petitions has now expired.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### RENTAL FAIRNESS ACT, 2017 LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN LOCATION IMMOBILIÈRE

Madame Lalonde, on behalf of Mr. Ballard, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Madame Lalonde.

**Hon. Marie-France Lalonde:** I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa–Vanier. I turn it over to her at this particular moment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I recognize the member from Ottawa–Vanier.

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** Il me fait plaisir de me lever pour participer au débat concernant le projet de loi sur l'équité en location immobilière.

The proposed Rental Fairness Act is a comprehensive reform to ensure access to affordable housing for all Ontarians. It has been the subject of extensive consultations over the last year.

Before I begin, I want to take a moment to commend Minister Ballard for his great work on the issues of affordable housing and homelessness in this province. He could not be here today due to a medical appointment, but I know he looks forward to speaking to the Rental Fairness Act in the coming days.

I also want to take this time to thank the ministry's officials for all the hard work that they have done on this bill. I know that many of them are probably listening to this. Over the past three months, as the PA for the Minister of Housing, I've seen first-hand the level of professionalism and rigour that they have brought to this issue and to the issue generally of housing for Ontarians. It's very impressive to see their work, and I want to publicly thank them for their great work in the housing ministry.

I also want to acknowledge the member for Toronto–Danforth for shining a light on this issue and on the issue of rent control more generally, as well as the member from Trinity–Spadina and the member from Davenport for their insight on the bill.

Because Ontario's economy is booming, people want to move here. We know that Ontario is ranked highly as a top place in terms of stability, education, economy, environment, arts and culture, and legal and technical infrastructure. It's a province that aims to give opportunity for everyone. So families want to come to Ontario, and that's a good thing, but we want to make sure that they can have housing when they come.

I will divide my comments into two parts. First I want to present the bill in the context of the larger vision of a long-term affordable housing strategy for Ontario. Then I'll go through the details of the bill so that people understand well what we're talking about.

First of all, I think it is important to remember that the government has a core vision of ensuring in the long term an affordable housing strategy that would aim to provide every Ontarian access to an affordable and suitable home, providing them the foundation to secure employment and raise a family. That's what's building strong communities. For the last four months as the PA for housing, I've been part of a little bit of this strategy, and I can say how much I'm proud that our government is aiming to provide a strategy that ensures access to housing.

I want to give a shout-out to Leilani Farha, who is the United Nations rapporteur on housing. She is an Ontarian and she is someone who has lived in Windsor for many years. She is now in Ottawa. She has spoken extensively

on the need to have subnational units like provinces engage with the issue of housing, ensuring that there is access to housing for all.

Many of our international conventions speak to housing as being important to realize other goals. I would simply mention the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The international Convention on the Rights of the Child speaks to housing. The international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities speaks to housing, and also the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. All of these conventions speak to the importance of housing to allow for equality.

When we talk about housing, we ensure that it is suitable, that it is affordable and that it has security of tenure. This bill provides exactly for that type of reform that is necessary.

I want to continue to mention all of the things that have been done to put in force this long-term strategy for affordable housing. We know that inclusionary zoning has been put forward, as well as ensuring that secondary suites are now available for people to offer to renters. The point of this is to increase supply. We know that increasing supply is key to ensuring affordable housing, but it's not enough.

**1540**

It's certainly the job of the government to ensure that we diminish the vulnerability of tenants who are faced with increasing, skyrocketing rent increases. We know that housing prices have increased dramatically, and the data has shown, for example, that in Toronto, housing prices have increased more than 33% from last year.

Housing affordability is also a problem in other areas. I know that some renters in Ottawa–Vanier, which is the riding that I have the honour to represent, have been concerned about this. When there's a housing increase or rent control or when people are faced with an increase in rent that they have not predicted, that is double, as we have often heard in this House, it puts them in a vulnerable position. It creates uncertainty for their family, and they are unable to shoulder that burden and may have to move. Constant moving is bad for the stability of families, and it does not allow for good communities to be built. This economic vulnerability must be confronted, and that's exactly the purpose of this bill.

Last week, I was very pleased when the government released Ontario's Fair Housing Plan. The fair housing plan is a plan that proposes a comprehensive set of 16 actions that aim to deal with the difficulty in the current housing market. First of all, this plan includes a 15% non-resident speculation tax that will be applicable in the greater Golden Horseshoe region and is specifically designed to control the volatility of the housing market in that area. It will also empower cities to introduce a vacant homes property tax. We know, and we know in Ottawa, that often vacant lots and vacant apartments are not being offered to tenants. That's a problem. It reduces the supply, and that's wrong. So we need to ensure that all the incen-

tives are at the right place to make sure that we have enough housing for everyone.

The government will also look into what we call paper flipping, which is the quick speculation on real estate transactions. It will also give municipalities the flexibility to use the property tax to unlock development opportunities. It will try to again remove all the costs and all the red tape that prevent development from occurring in practical terms, and also unveil a \$125-million program over five years to encourage the construction of rental apartment buildings.

All of this is very important. In the meantime, we need to ensure that we also deal with the rental increases that have been discussed in this House multiple times. We know that increasing supply is part of the solution, but we know that it's not enough. We need to respond to the dramatic increases in housing prices, and not doing so would be irresponsible.

Monsieur le Président, la loi sur l'équité en location immobilière, si elle est adoptée, propose un plan pour mieux servir les Ontariens. Entre autres, ça vise tout d'abord à régler le problème de la croissance ou de la hausse sans limites des loyers.

The aim of the proposed Rental Fairness Act is to bring fairness to Ontario's entire rental housing system. This bill is comprised of many aspects, and I'll detail them all.

I'll first talk a little bit about the first part of the bill, which is the expansion of rent control or rent stabilization, as I will describe, to an additional 250,000 families or units that now are excluded by an exemption that has existed since 1991. I also will describe the second part of the bill, which is introducing the authority for the minister to mandate a standard lease. Thirdly, we'll talk about the clarification and the limits on the landlord's possibility of evictions for his or her own use. We'll deal also with some of the streamlining that needs to be done for processes at the Landlord and Tenant Board, and we'll talk a little bit about elevator maintenance and dealing with carbon costs.

The bill is comprehensive. I hope that you bear with me; I will try to go through it in detail, explaining how indeed the principle is always the same. We're trying to ensure that tenants are treated fairly and that they're not faced with unreasonable expenses. We're dealing with many irritants that came through the consultations both on the landlord and on the tenant side. Finally, we're going to deal a little bit with transitional housing, which is another issue that needs to be dealt with in this bill.

Let me start with rent control, which has been the aspect of the bill that has been most described in the newspapers and elsewhere. It is important to recognize what type of rent control is in existence in Ontario. For the purists out there, in the literature, there's a difference between rent stabilization and rent control. In Ontario, the type of rent control that we have is more of a type of rent stabilization, because it's not the government that fixes the price of the unit; it's the market. The only thing that we have as rent control is limiting the type of in-

creases that can be done on a unit. Also, it only resides with the tenant. So once a tenant moves, the landlord can put the unit back on the market at a price that he or she deems to be palatable to the market. So it's not really complete rent control in the way we see in Europe or elsewhere, where actually the price of the unit is fixed by the government or the control rests with the unit. We have a rent control, what I call more rent stabilization, that provides protection for the tenant while he or she resides in the unit.

Let me just explain a little bit what the scope of this expansion is. There are currently over one million units that are already covered by rent control. Those are all the buildings that were built prior to 1991. In 1991, there was an exemption for buildings built after. Over the last 26 years we have had all the buildings that were supposed to respond to the supply problem and offer rental units at an affordable price. Unfortunately, only 250,000 units were built in the last 26 years. So the point of the amendment here and the point of the bill, if adopted, would be to extend the rent control that we have to these 250,000 units that were built after 1991 and are currently excluded.

Needless to say, the advantage of this bill, if passed, is that it will stop the two-tiered system that we currently have in Ontario. It's important to recognize how much this is unfair. It makes no sense to have a difference between the treatment of tenants that depends on whether the building in which they live was built before 1991 or after 1991. It makes no sense as a public policy, and I think it's time to remedy it.

The way in which rent control—or rent stabilization, as I prefer to call it—works is that rent control limits the annual increase to the consumer price index, or 2.5%. This ensures that increases in rental costs can only rise at the rate that is posted annually, and that complies with the consumer price index. For 2017, this consumer price index is 1.5%. It will be revised annually, and in June there will be a new consumer price index that will come out. So tenants and landlords now know that their rent can increase only by the consumer price index—by 1.5%, for example—or at the maximum, 2.5%. That's an important security. It provides certainty for everyone: certainty for the landlord and certainty for the tenants, who can therefore plan their lives around this.

1550

Making all private rental units subject to the same rules makes a lot of sense and, indeed, I think it's part of the plan to ensure that everyone is treated the same and people know what is expected of them. This will also be an objective that we'll see in the mandatory standard lease that I'll discuss a little bit later.

La loi sur l'équité en location immobilière, qui est proposée ici, vise à rendre plus équitable l'ensemble du système de location immobilière en Ontario, entre autres, en éliminant l'exemption qui existe pour les édifices qui étaient construits après 1991. Le projet de loi, s'il est adopté, abandonne un peu cette approche à deux vitesses, où les droits des locataires dépendent de si leur édifice a été construit avant 1991 ou après 1991. C'est

évidemment une distinction qui n'a pas beaucoup de sens et qui ne correspond pas aux besoins des locataires en Ontario. La solution à deux niveaux, évidemment, n'existe pas dans d'autres provinces et donc il n'y a pas de raison pour laquelle elle devrait se maintenir en Ontario.

Let me talk a little bit to suggest that the type of rent control that we have suggested is not going to be a brake on offering rental; it's not a brake on supply. Certainly we will continue to need incentives to increase the supply of housing, but the type of rent control that we have, rent control « à l'ontarienne », if I want to say, is not a brake, is not a failure and does not prevent the ability for landlords to continue to invest in their properties or to continue to offer rental properties to tenants.

Indeed, if we look at the experience that we've had since 1991, I think we see that there is not a greater amount of properties that are in a bad state, whether they're prior to 1991 or post-1991. Obviously, the buildings pre-1991 are older and require more maintenance, but there's no evidence that shows that they are worse or they're not as well taken care of as the ones after. It just depends on the landlord and the quality of the building. So the idea that rent control is actually bad for the maintenance of a building just does not bear out under the facts as we have experienced them in Ontario.

Certainly we know that it's important to continue to create incentives, as I've described, to ensure that there's sufficient supply of residential units, but we must look at the facts that we have here in Ontario and show that, post-1991, only 6% of buildings—and there have been lots of buildings since 1991—were dedicated to private rental units. The rest of them were big condos or houses for owners.

I think it's important to recognize that the experience has been that the rent control that has existed and the exemption that has been made have not provided the market with sufficient incentive to build rental units. We must do more, and I think that's the point of what we're trying to propose today.

The proposed bill does not only deal with rent control, because it reflects the long consultations that were done during the last year and provides a response to many irritants that came out in the consultations both on the landlord side and on the tenant side. Just to mention the type of consultations that were done over the last year, we have had numerous meetings with landlords and tenant associations, indigenous communities; a wide range of people submitted online—more than 400 submissions were received online. I think the result of all this consultation results in a bill that actually responds not only to the initial crisis, but to long-standing irritants in the Residential Tenancies Act.

If passed—and I think that's an important part here that I want to make sure people understand—the rent control amendment under the Rental Fairness Act will ensure that any rent increase notices served on tenants living in units built after 1991 or after the announcement of our fair housing plan on April 20 are rolled back to the

rent increase guideline amounts. Therefore, the point is simply this: Any rent increases after April 20 cannot be above the guideline. They must comply with the 1.5%. That's important, because we want to make sure that all tenants are protected as effectively as possible.

If we continue to look at the range of irritants that have been disclosed and the way in which it's important for the government to move forward on amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act, I want to respond a little bit to some of the issues that were raised in the context of this consultation.

Je tiens à souligner qu'un aspect des changements que nous proposons, c'est certainement le contrôle des loyers, mais aussi d'autres aspects qui sont sortis des consultations tenues au cours de la dernière année. Nous savons qu'il y a beaucoup de problèmes. Les locataires sont confrontés à toutes sortes de problèmes qui viennent souvent d'un manque de clarté dans la législation ou, franchement, de comportements qui auraient dû être prévus et qui devraient être mieux contrôlés. C'est le but, évidemment, des amendements qui vont être proposés et qui sont proposés ici.

Certainly the Residential Tenancies Act always attempts to balance the interests of landlord and tenant. We want to ensure that tenants live in secure places and have security of tenure. That's one aspect that is important in ensuring good housing rights, and that's at the core of the Residential Tenancies Act. We also want to make sure that landlords are treated fairly, and that good landlords who act in good faith are also protected.

Landlords will continue to have the same protections that they have now in the following ways: They can certainly negotiate starting rent, based on market value—that's what I call stabilization rent control; they can negotiate market rent when there's a new tenant coming—that's what we generally call, in the industry, vacancy decontrol. So you rent to a tenant, and during the time of the tenancy, every year, you need to comply with the 1.5% increase, so you know what's going to happen, but eventually, when the tenant leaves, then you can put this unit on the market at the price that you deem the market will bear. You could increase, therefore, the rent to a higher amount. That's one possibility for the landlord. It exists already and will continue to exist in the amended legislation.

It's also possible for landlords who are faced with huge renovation costs that are important and necessary for the building—huge capital costs above the rental guideline increase—that will be borne by the tenants. I'll talk a little bit more about this, but this is an integral part of rent control « à l'ontarienne ». This is an integral part of ensuring that landlords who want to do and have to do important work to maintain their building—to provide accessibility, for example, for persons with disabilities—are not prevented from doing so.

The Residential Tenancies Act, it's important to remember, also provides a fast-track eviction process for illegal drug activity, for actions that seriously impair the safety of others, for deliberate damage to a unit or the

apartment building and for causing disturbances in a smaller complex where the landlord also resides.

In a way, the rent control that we're talking about is the rent control we've had for many years for buildings that were built before 1991. It's rent control that works. We will talk a little bit about some of the fixes that are necessary that respond a little bit to the lack of clarity. You will see that in the bill there are provisions to add the possibility of regulations to clarify exactly what types of capital expenditures can be proposed to justify an above-guideline increase to the rent.

#### 1600

I just want to make sure that I have the time to look at the other aspects of the bill that are there to protect tenants and ensure that the bill responds to the scope and the range of issues that came out in the discussion in the consultations.

The legislation therefore does not address only rent controls, but is also a comprehensive suite of reforms that address issues across the rental housing system, issues like illegal clauses in leases, unfounded evictions, rent increases above the provincial guidelines, and elevator repairs. I know that in this House we've had several petitions wanting the government to do something about elevator repairs, and I'll talk a little bit about the solution that this bill proposes.

I want to mention the great work that the Ministry of Housing officials have done in the last year in terms of looking at the Residential Tenancies Act and the way in which they've conducted extended discussions with landlords; tenants; stakeholders; advocacy organizations; transitional housing providers—it's going to be an important part of the bill as well; municipal service managers; indigenous partners; and members of the indigenous strategy table. Sessions were held with people with lived experience in transitional housing programs, particularly people who have lived on the street and are now in transitional housing, where they benefit from treatment that allows them to access services that give them the capacity to thereafter move to a permanent rental unit.

As I mentioned, we received over 400 submissions from citizens from all across the province to the web-based consultation. The concerns that were expressed frame a little bit the rest of the legislation, which deals really with some of the irritants that were constantly raised.

The first one I want to talk about is the standard lease. A standard lease is essentially a mandatory form of lease that exists in pretty much every province except Ontario and Alberta. I know from my experience in the province of Quebec that it's a standard way in which it provides clarity for everyone. The terms are well understood by all parties, and it's a valuable resource for both the tenant and the landlord. Indeed, landlords, particularly smaller landlords who deal with smaller units and don't have as many big operations, wanted to have a standard lease because it's a tool that will prevent exploitative clauses that are against the Residential Tenancies Act that get put in leases and that tenants who don't know better just sign.

It's important that we bring consistency to the treatment of all tenants in Ontario, ensuring that they know their rights and that landlords know as well that they're bound by the Residential Tenancies Act. The idea of a standard lease provides that. It avoids unnecessary disputes that may occur when you have a verbal lease. It also ensures that both sides know what they're getting into. So it provides clarity and transparency.

We know that this standard lease will go a long way to probably diminish disputes between landlords and tenants. It will provide standard clauses and will also allow the parties to negotiate additional clauses—that will always be possible—but it will make sure that tenants have the ability to check whether these additional clauses are indeed in conformity with the Residential Tenancies Act, in conformity with the law, and that they're not illegal.

I think the standard lease will go a long way to help people understand what's going on, understand what their obligations are, and hopefully diminish acrimony or disputes that can only be resolved with difficulty.

Just to be clear, the Rental Fairness Act that we're proposing provides the authority to the Minister of Housing to make regulations requiring a standard lease for all residential tenancies.

L'utilisation d'un bail standard, rédigé clairement et facile à lire, devrait aider tous les locataires en Ontario, puisque ça va éviter que les gens ne comprennent pas ou ne savent pas dans quoi ils s'engagent. Ça va aussi éviter que des clauses abusives se retrouvent dans des baux—qui sont donc illégales—mais que le locataire n'a pas eu l'occasion de bien les lire ou de bien comprendre.

It's obvious and I think it should be clear that the standard lease, before it is provided by regulation, will be the subject of consultation by the ministry and people who—I think we are hoping to build on best practices around Ontario to have a standard lease that actually responds well to the needs of all players and is read and drafted in a way that people can understand. I think that will be one objective that we will try to achieve in this standard lease.

I want to talk a little bit on the clarification of limits on the landlord's own use of eviction. This is a provision in the Residential Tenancies Act that detracts from what we usually call security of tenure for a tenant. A tenant is entitled, once he or she has entered into a lease agreement, to have this lease agreement renewed if indeed the person pays the rent and continues to act as a good tenant. One of the limitations on this is to afford the owner of a building the ability to recuperate that apartment if he or she needs it for himself/herself or for the family. That's what we call the landlord's eviction for one's own use.

Throughout the province and throughout the consultation, we heard many times about the way in which at times this possibility was exploited by some landlords who in bad faith would say, "Yes, I want to recuperate this apartment for my own use," or for their daughter or their son, and then within two months were putting the rental unit back on the market at a much higher price. That's not what the intent of the act is. The intent of the

act is to balance the rights of tenants to security of tenure versus the right of owners to recuperate properties that they own for their own use—and it has to be for their own use, not for something else.

The proposition here is to help ensure that the intent of the act is clearly implemented. Landlords who want to recuperate a property that they own will have to live in it for one year to ensure that they are not abusing that possibility. This will remedy, I think, some of the bad omens that exist around this own-use possibility. I think it should remedy the abuse use. The landlord who, within a year, decides to put back the unit on the market at a higher price or advertise the unit for rent will be deemed in bad faith unless he or she proves that something else has happened and the situation has changed. That will be an important way, I think, in which we can clarify what was always the intent of the act and make sure that people are not abused.

One of the irritants of the Residential Tenancies Act also dealt with the way in which some landlords would collect additional charges from tenants after they had vacated the premises. Let's give an example where a tenant would be evicted for failure to pay rent and would leave following the eviction, and then would be sued by the previous landlord, who would say, "Well, you left the premises, and therefore I'm suing you for the additional two months of rent after you left the premises." Again, it's a clarification ensuring that landlords do not add additional charges when tenants have indeed vacated the premises. It would, therefore, be inappropriate for a landlord to charge any additional fees and penalties if the tenant has already vacated the unit.

#### 1610

This was particularly a problem for partners, often women, who would flee an abusive situation. The tenancy would be vacated and so on, and then they would be charged additional penalties that their previous partner had failed to pay. So there are some issues there where we're trying to ensure that there's some clarity brought to the legislation.

Many tenants complained about the fact that above-guideline rent increases were often confusing and some landlords were proceeding in terms where normally it should not have been allowed. What we're providing here is the authority to make regulations to specify exactly what capital would be required and will be appropriate for an above-the-guideline increase.

Mr. Speaker, I know the time is passing and interest may be waning on this important piece, but I just want to make sure that we explain the bill fully.

Le projet de loi doit être bien compris pour qu'on puisse avoir un débat de qualité sur cet important projet de loi.

Un autre aspect qui est sorti assez souvent des discussions était, évidemment, le grand problème avec les ascenseurs.

Many tenants complain that elevator repairs are slow to come and, indeed, we know that it's a problem in Ontario. There's more to do than simply the Residential

Tenancies Act. There may be some market failures there. There may be some improvements that could be made in ensuring the parts are in Ontario and that improvements to elevators are made.

We have to recognize that our elevators are essential amenities in high-rises. They're essential amenities for mothers with strollers, people with disabilities and seniors. It's inappropriate to have landlords who fail to proceed speedily in having the elevators repaired. It slows down the process for everyone and certainly can have incredibly harsh effects on some categories of people.

The solution that is proposed here is to prevent the landlord from having an above-the-guideline increase approved if indeed there are some work orders on elevator repairs that have not been fulfilled. It will create an incentive for a landlord to indeed finish the repairs, before having access to an above-the-guideline increase. That should at least provide some incentive for landlords to actually get the repairs done as quickly as possible.

I want to mention a couple of other things that are in the bill that my colleagues may want to reflect upon. It ensures that carbon costs are not passed to tenants, because that would defeat the very purpose of carbon costs, which are supposed to be recognized by a landlord, who must and should make their buildings more efficient. This was part of the climate change plan.

Alors, il faut vraiment reconnaître que ce projet de loi vise, évidemment, à répondre à beaucoup d'enjeux qui ont été soulevés, à la fois par les propriétaires et par les locataires, tout au long des consultations. Il vise d'une certaine façon à améliorer la loi sur la location immobilière. On espère, évidemment, que tous les participants au débat vont bien y réfléchir.

I just want to make sure, just in passing—the exclusion of transitional housing from the bill is an important part of the consultation. Transitional housing is a key component to ensure that people are off the street. Homeless people who get into transitional housing and have access to treatment to allow them to indeed eventually access permanent housing—we are proposing that the treatment part and the exemption that currently exists be extended to four years, provided that there is agreement between the owner of the facility that provides transitional housing services and that this is being disclosed and fully transparent.

Alors, je vous remercie beaucoup.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comment on Bill 124, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. I want to thank the member for Ottawa–Vanier for carrying the debate this afternoon on this bill at second reading. The government has really created a mess in the housing sector, and now they've rushed to try to get a bill passed before this session of Parliament ends on June 1.

Over the break week, I had the opportunity to go to the sod-turning of a project in downtown Brockville, a housing development. The name of the development is

Wall Street Village. It's an 85-unit building, with, I believe, 30 units as rent-geared-to-income. The very first meeting that I had with the Ministry of Housing when I became a member of the Legislature in 2010 was about this development.

You've got a situation where it took this government seven years to deal with the city of Brockville, the united counties of Leeds and Grenville and the best rental housing provider in my riding. This corporation has been building rental housing units for in excess of 35 years. The red tape that this government put up to be able to have this organization jump through these hoops—we have to deal with the issue of supply. This is what this government has to get through their heads: that supply is so key. Dealing with the red tape for a non-profit—as I said, they're the best rental housing provider in my riding, and it took them seven years to deal with this issue. I didn't even have a computer in my office yet in 2010; I'd barely opened the door, and I had a meeting about this development.

This government has made a mess, and I'm worried that this bill isn't going to deal with it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**M. Taras Natyshak:** J'aimerais féliciter notre collègue la députée d'Ottawa–Vanier sur son discours. Évidemment, elle a fait son « homework ».

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ses devoirs.

**M. Taras Natyshak:** Ses devoirs.

This is the first opportunity I've had to listen to our colleague at length. It is clear that you've done your homework and your research on the bill, and you presented it to the House quite eloquently.

New Democrats are generally supportive of the thrust of the bill. That could be because we, as a party and as members, have been advocating for protection for renters for a very long time. We could point to recent bills put forward by our colleague from Toronto–Danforth as potentially being the impetus for this bill; it wasn't until New Democrats put pressure, as always, on the government to initiate some form of action on their part to address the issues that we know exist out there.

We are generally supportive. We look forward to this bill moving through the process, in which I am certain there will be amendments put forward to strengthen the bill even further. We see that in general what this bill does is effectively enact what our colleague from Toronto–Danforth presented in his Bill 106. These are issues that are long-standing and really reflect a 180-degree turn from the government since 2003, when they first proposed to support and protect renters. It has taken us that long. I guess it's 14 long years until we see a bill put forward that actually does something to close the 1991 loophole. But we will stand strong here in the House to ensure that the legislation does indeed protect renters.

1620

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. James J. Bradley:** I was delighted to see this comprehensive package brought forward to deal with the circumstances facing housing in the province.

Now, there are some who constantly talk about supply. What they really have in the back of their minds—not all, but some—is, “Let’s pave that greenbelt over.” They can’t wait to get at the greenbelt, pave that good farmland, environmentally sensitive land. Perhaps they might have some sympathetic people on local conservation authorities who now think that development is what their role is, facilitating development rather than protecting the environment. They might think that.

But there’s no question it’s multi-faceted. One aspect of it truly is supply, and the government has, in its package dealing with housing, some measures that we think will help with supply of housing. We also want to ensure that there isn’t gouging going on.

What happened back in 1991 was—it was said, at least—that apartments, those rental properties, built after 1991 would not be subjected to rent control. The vision was, “Well, there’s going to be all kinds of rental housing built in the province.” It just didn’t happen. There was some, but precious little. In fact, most of it was condo buildings that went up in the province.

They have brought it upon themselves, those who decided that they’re going to not make rent control work. We saw some significant increases that people have to be protected from. There’s still a provision out there for essential works that must be done within buildings, and they can go to the Landlord and Tenant Board—the Rent Control Board, as they used to call it—and have provision made for an increase for that purpose.

This is a comprehensive package that engaged in a lot of consultation and I think that members of this House will probably want to support it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I do appreciate the comments from the—I’ll still say “the new member from Ottawa–Vanier.” I haven’t officially ever had the chance to welcome her; personally, I did in the hallway one day. Welcome to the Legislature. I can see you’re fitting in very well, handling some significant duties as the parliamentary assistant.

The member from St. Catharines wants to question the motives of people who want to bring up the word “supply” and he wants to throw something in there that is irrelevant to the discussion. Economics are not as complicated as he might want to make them out to be. If you simply don’t have enough supply, enough stock to provide accommodations for the people who need them, demand goes up, supply is down and price goes up. If there’s an excess of supply, then price goes down because the competitive marketplace takes over.

This government likes to throw in the riddles and everything and try to question motives, but they realize that over the last 14 years, they’ve done nothing to address the supply issue. In fact, they’ve done all kinds of things that are going to curtail the supply of rental

housing stock available to people who need it. When you curtail that stock, the prices rise because there are not enough places for people to go. The population continues to grow.

The prices of homes to buy in the city of Toronto are beyond the reach of any young people today: \$1.3 million. A family of anybody, but the young people—

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Many old people too.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The old people, if they bought a home 30 years ago, are going to do all right. But the young people who are trying to get into the market at \$1.3 million for a starter—it’s not going to work.

This government has created the crisis; now they’re under political pressure to do something about it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Now we return to the member from Ottawa–Vanier for final comments.

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** Je veux remercier les gens qui ont commenté sur ce projet de loi.

It’s a great honor to be participating in this debate in the House and to join my colleagues. I just want to reflect a little on the issue of what we’re trying to achieve here. This bill is certainly one that aims to regulate the market to ensure that renters are protected. That’s the purpose of it. There are a lot of other measures that have been proposed and that are part of the plan to continue to ensure that supply is there. Indeed, since I have arrived, I’ve seen lots of initiatives, including inclusionary zoning and including facilitating second suites being offered to renters. All of these I think are designed to increase supply. We know that supply is important, but it’s not enough. It’s not enough to actually ensure that people are protected. This bill aims to protect tenants while recognizing and facilitating some of the aspects in their dealings with the landlord.

As I said, it reflects not only the rent control « à l’ontarienne », a rent control that is flexible enough to allow for investment in property, but also responds to a whole host of problems that have been plaguing the system and need to be resolved.

I hope that we can count on the support of everyone.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate? I recognize the member from Nepean–Carleton.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I would like to seek unanimous consent, Speaker, to stand down the Progressive Conservative lead for today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The member is seeking unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Back to the member for Nepean–Carleton.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It is my pleasure to rise in debate today on Bill 124, the Rental Fairness Act, 2017. Before I do, I would like to commend the hard work of my colleague the member from Oxford, who is our critic and who will be speaking at length to this bill at a later date. His work before and during the introduction of this bill I think has been noted for quite some time. In fact, I just want to share this with you, Speaker. I was elected 11 years ago. I was elected on March 30, and I first took my

seat in this House a couple of weeks later. As I did, I was appointed the associate critic for municipal affairs and housing, and our critic Mr. Hardeman was also the critic back then. We worked with Mr. John Tory, who was our leader at the time. Our first piece of legislation that we worked on together, which occurred over the summer of 2006, was the changes to the Residential Tenancies Act by the province of Ontario.

The issues that we're dealing with aren't new. They have been around as long as I've been in this assembly, for the past 11 years. They have certainly been around for the past 14 years that this government has been in office and that this Premier, Ms. Kathleen Wynne, has been a member of the city of Toronto, sitting here.

I wanted to point that out because if you look at the context of what has happened, you understand very clearly that, over the past 14 years, the out-of-control housing market in the city of Toronto and surrounding areas is actually a made-in-Ontario mess, created by this Liberal government. Over the past year, as I have watched them lose by-elections and squander public support for their party and for their government, one thing I have noticed is these 11th-hour Hail Mary pieces of legislation, designed to get the government back up in favour with Ontarians.

That's what I see here. After 14 years, they have deliberately done nothing until a year before a general election, a year before they have to go back to the polls. It was as late as October of last year when Kathleen Wynne and this Liberal government were denying there was a problem. They denied it. But you get to a magical number of 11% in the polls, and you're all of a sudden at a 89% disapproval rating with the people of this province, and then voilà.

I'd be remiss not to point out that it's the exact same tactic they used on hydro. I'm almost wondering, and I think that there will be many pundits as well who will be wondering, are we going to see now taxpayer-funded ads patting this government on the back for 14 years of neglect and mismanagement? Is that what we're going to expect? I really would like to know. I think that's an important question for us to ask.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I hear my colleague from St. Catharines yet again blaming Mike Harris. You know what? One of these days I'm going to walk in the front doors here, and they're going to be blaming Sir John A. Macdonald for founding Confederation, because everything the Liberals do is anti-Conservative. They're not in it for you anymore. It simply is very clear when you look at this, because we've had 14 years of unprecedented and unaffordable levels for home ownership.

**1630**

I will often tell this story, but I came to Ontario with \$200 in my pocket, and I did because I knew that in Ontario, after I graduated from university, you could have the Canadian dream. I came from a have-not province, from a very small rural town in Nova Scotia called New Glasgow. I came here with \$200, a student loan and a car

I couldn't afford to take with me here. I couch-surfed for a while until I was able to stand on my feet. But when I came here, I knew that the province of Ontario was a place where you could get a job. With that job, you would make a decent living. With that decent living, you could buy a house. You could possibly even buy a car, which I was able to do. You would expect that you could comfortably retire in the province of Ontario.

What's happened in the last 14 years? We have seen this government bring in the single largest income tax in Ontario's history, which was the health tax. They brought in the single largest sales tax in Ontario's history, the HST. They brought in the single largest environmental tax in the province of Ontario with the eco tax, and now the cap-and-trade. They keep outdoing themselves in how they're going to raise taxes and make life unaffordable for the people of Ontario. I haven't even gotten into the Green Energy Act, which is effectively a tax on our heat and our hydro in the province of Ontario.

When you look at the sum of all of these costs, you recognize that it is harder and harder now for families to make ends meet. It's harder and harder for them to save for their family home, and on top of that, once they do get that elusive carrot that is being dangled in front of their eyes because they've been saving this money, they are priced out of the market.

I have two assistants, one in Ottawa and one in Toronto. They both got engaged this past year. They both bought a home this past year. For the same size of home in Ottawa, my staffer paid just over \$200,000. Here, in the city of Toronto, the same type of home is almost \$700,000.

There was a story just last week that this Toronto couple sold their home for \$800,000 in Toronto, and they're now going to live in Ottawa and get jobs there, and they're going to live mortgage-free because they made so much money off the sale here. I think that's very clear.

Again, Ontario families and seniors are working very hard, but they're worried that they're not going to be able to afford their home, and the dream of home ownership is now out of reach for so many people.

My leader made a revelation last week, and I want to talk a little bit about the plan that my party has put forward. He pointed out last week that the price for selling a home in the GTA jumped by 33% in one year alone. There were 18,500 homes on the market for sale in January 2007, which was the year that this government won its second mandate. A decade later, there are only 15,024 homes. The reality is that we have a major shortage.

This is a problem, Speaker, because—as you'll recall, last week I spoke to the anti-racism bill. I talked about the changes in demographics in the province, but I also talked about the growth in our two largest cities: Ottawa and, of course, Toronto. Statistics Canada says the population in Toronto and surrounding municipalities is growing. Between 2012 and 2015, our population is expected to increase by 533,000 people, yet there are only slightly more than 267,000 housing starts that took place.

You look at the reality and you look at this piece of legislation. What the Liberals have decided to do is that they are going to place more regulations and more taxes on more people. Over the years, they've piled on so much red tape and new regulations in the housing industry that it has now delayed building and increased the price. When you look at the price hikes, you now recognize that some of the government's policies have been directly responsible for this.

In fact, David Reevely, who is from the Ottawa Citizen, from the city that I am from, had an interesting little take on this. I'd like to read it because I thought it was quite good: "The government made choices, discovered those choices had bad consequences, and then took another run. When you're a politician you do deserve some credit for doing what you can to fix your mistakes, but you still made them." I think that, to me, speaks to exactly what we're talking about here today. This government has made mistakes, and this is a made-in-Ontario mess.

Again, until we are able to deal with this housing supply, we aren't going to fix housing affordability. In fact, it was the Premier's own finance minister who has waxed openly about the fact that his new foreign owner tax may not actually impact anything at all, because they haven't been taking any statistics. There is no data to prove that what the government is doing may actually even, in fact, work. I think until we deal with that housing supply, we're really not going to delve more deeply.

I also want to point out, Speaker, that I happen to live in one of the fastest-growing communities inside the entire country. Nepean–Carleton will split into three with the federal ridings. Some will go into Orléans, some will go to a newly created riding called Carleton, and others will go to a newly created riding called Nepean. In Nepean–Carleton at the moment, we have fast-growing communities like Riverside South, Findlay Creek, Greely, and of course, the fastest-growing in all of Ottawa, which is Barrhaven.

In Barrhaven, we are almost separated from the city of Ottawa. Despite the fact that we are all inside the city of Ottawa, we have a major greenbelt, so we have protected land that we jealously guard. We appreciate not only the natural beauty of the trails that we have there, but also we have farmland inside the city of Ottawa, which is excellent.

I heard what the government is trying to threaten, that if you don't agree 100% with them all the time, then you want to build on the greenbelt. Well, I am very well documented inside the city of Ottawa for my fierce protection of that land. We have also in this caucus been fierce defenders of agricultural land in the province. So if I hear one more time from the Liberals that they want to spin that, I'll just point out to them that they're wrong, and they're just saying whatever they want, whatever piques their fancy, in order to vilify the Progressive Conservative caucus. I won't stand for that, Speaker, so they should know it.

But I want to go into the Liberals' plan, and I just want to point out some of the issues. I want to talk about red tape. The Liberal announcement fails to address the red tape that many of our developers are feeling, as well as those in the housing market. It raises the price for potential owners. In fact, at their announcement, they didn't cut a single piece of red tape.

There was a time, I believe, in British Columbia that they did red tape reduction. It's also a Liberal government. It saved their economy about a billion dollars.

This government often talks a good game about how they're a political force for good—"government is a good force for good"—but the government is making it more difficult for people to deal with this.

I wanted to point out—my leader pointed this out earlier—that in Ontario it can take over 18 months to get municipal approvals for standard single-family multi-dwelling projects that do not require zoning. I'm going to give you an example here, Speaker. In Aurora, it takes 19 months; Ajax, 19 months; Toronto, 17 months; and Hamilton, 17 months. These delays pose further problems for those who are building homes. It costs them thousands of dollars in employee salaries, interest on loans and other items which are eventually passed on to the buyer. That is another example of the government failing to address the root of the problem.

I also want to talk about rent control. That's an area that both the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario as well as those who are leasing have talked about. Just about 20 minutes ago, an article came out on the CBC. Jim Murphy, the CEO of the Ontario federation of housing, said it's "blatantly unfair." He's very concerned. Julie Bond, who leases several condos, previously told the CBC, "Maintenance includes common-element hydro, which has doubled in the recent years directly due to government policy on that portfolio.

"Perhaps this is a great way to correct the housing market, to ensure all landlords sell their units."

1640

It's interesting, because as I was reading it, it was retweeted by Robyn Urback, who is a former columnist with the National Post but now works for the CBC. She said, what does this mean? It means now utilities likely won't be included in units. She also made a joke. She said it also probably means we're going to see more Liberal ads, paid for by the taxpayers, patting themselves on the back, as I had indicated just a little bit earlier. I think that was pretty interesting. Whenever the government starts to muse openly about rent control, landlords would obviously increase the rent, so I suspect that may indeed happen here.

The next thing we need to talk about, obviously, when you're looking at rent control, when you're looking at red tape, is the fact of the matter that the rental supply isn't there. This doesn't at all deal with the root of the problem and building new rental units. Toronto has a very low vacancy rate. It's about 1%.

I want to point this out, Speaker, and I mention it all the time. My rent for my Toronto apartment is actually

more than my mortgage on a home that is a single-family dwelling with a very large lot of land in Nepean. I always make that point, because it's very shocking to me that that can be such a disparity.

Toronto developer Brad Lamb—we always see his face on all of the billboards here in the city—said the province didn't do anything to boost supply in Ontario, and he vowed to cancel any rental projects that were already in his pipeline.

He said, "Everything is stopping on the dime. I had nine apartment buildings in my pipeline," describing projects in Toronto's central core, its suburbs and in Hamilton. "I can tell you as of this announcement I will not do any of them."

What is a concern here, Speaker, is that when you look at some of the economists and you listen to what some of them have to say, they are very concerned.

I want, for example, to read from Derek Holt, a Scotiabank economist: "The household sector has been pretty much the only game in town when it comes to driving broad Canadian GDP growth." That's interesting. He also says the government should be "very careful in not removing what has essentially been the only source of growth in the economy for years now and doing so (a) potentially at the peak of the cycle, and (b) with cavalier attitudes to the importance of facts and figures." Those are quotes from the Scotiabank economist.

Also, Robert Kavcic works with the Bank of Montreal. He said that if anything, the package might be tepid but "The bark is bigger than the bite."

Finally, Benjamin Tal, an economist at the CIBC, wrote that while most of the policies are "reasonable and potentially helpful," the foreign buyer tax and a crackdown on assignment sales would both have only a marginal impact on the market.

Obviously, we all want to see affordability as a key driver here so that homeowners are protected. But one of the concerns that I do have is that this is an eleventh-hour Hail Mary pass from the government in order to compete in an election. It's also one where I think it's going to hamper a lot of people who are either building supply or are renting. There are some very draconian measures, I would suggest, that the government would put forward.

I think those are some of the issues.

So where would Patrick Brown go? Well, let me talk about this.

First, we would address the supply of housing. We would reduce red tape and regulatory burdens that both limit supply and increase costs that are eventually passed on to consumers.

Second, we would collect data on speculative vacancies, which the government hasn't done in many years.

Third, the government must assess its housing and land portfolio to determine how many homes they actually own in the GTA and whether those could be released.

Fourth, establish a panel of experts that includes professionals in the not-for-profit planning, housing and realtors and homeowners.

I think the final thing is to deal with rental housing. When the government starts to muse that they're going to get involved, what ends up happening is you see people like Brad Lamb say that they're not going to pursue this any further.

Speaker, this is a big issue for many people, and it's an important one for people who are just starting out or for parents who may need to buy a bigger home because they had a starter home and their family is growing. I really feel great empathy for those families, because the province of Ontario is not an easy and welcoming place for people to either grow their family or to start their family or even, at this point in time, to retire.

The government is going to get up and they're going to say that we don't support this and we don't support that. They don't really know, because I haven't indicated one way or the other where my party will vote on this. That will be for our critic to share here. But I will tell you something, Speaker: When you are a member of the official opposition, your job is to criticize government policy. It is our job to point out the flaws in legislation and it is our job to stand for those who feel as though they do not have a voice. So today, that was what I chose to do. But again, I will not stand here and allow the government to paint my party in the light in which they want to. In fact, my Progressive Conservative colleagues and I have been talking about affordability since before I was here, and I know that they will continue to talk about affordability long after I have left this place. I go back to the David Reevley thesis, which is that this is a government that, after 14 years, has figured out that it has made a whole bunch of mistakes. Now they want us to pat them on the back and forget the mistakes they've made. But this is a made-in-Ontario mess by this Liberal government, and only now with them at 9% in the polls are they prepared to fix it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Questions and comments?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It was interesting listening to the member from Ottawa–Orléans and what she had to say about the Rental Fairness Act. Basically, we have a Liberal government that has been talking about changing the rental act since 2003. We are now in 2017, and finally we have a bill in front of us. I must say that that's very much in line with what the previous speaker just said. If it hadn't been for the work of the member of the NDP from Toronto–Danforth, who put forward a bill and then brought forward examples as to what it looks like in Toronto when you do not have rent controls—when rent control ended in 1991, it looked like the poor people who lived in Liberty Village, I think it was called, here in Toronto faced a 100% increase in their rent. How could this ever be justified when nothing had changed except for an opportunity for landlords to make a pile of money at the expense of the people who needed a place to stay?

Some of what the speaker brought forward, that we should have a better handle as to how many units sit empty: How come we haven't done this kind of monitoring of the housing market so that we know where there's

opportunity, and the same thing with what needs to happen for more affordable housing to come on the market so that people who need affordable housing actually get it?

Some steps going in the right direction, but after a huge push from the NDP to get them there.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** I want to thank the member for Nepean–Carleton and the member for Nickel Belt for their comments. I understand that the point here is to determine whether this bill would indeed be appropriate for Ontario. I think our duty is actually to look at the bill itself that is in front of us.

I just want to respond to a couple of the questions that arose. Indeed, some questions arose as to whether it's only Ontario. It's not only Ontario; we know that British Columbia has experienced a similar spike in rental and housing prices. So I think we have to pay attention to that, and also look at the comprehensiveness of the package. Supply is indeed part of this package. There is a commitment to \$250 million over five years to actually build rental buildings as opposed to just condos—that's an important part—and also to ensure that wherever there are problems with municipal approvals, they are dealt with. We also must mention that in the package there was also a commitment for some provincial land to be made available for the building of additional units.

1650

So I think the core of the message here in this bill is to respond adequately to some of the irritants in the Residential Tenancies Act, as well as expand rent control—or what I prefer to call rent stabilization, in light of the rent control « à l'ontarienne » that we have had—to ensure all tenants in Ontario have the benefit of the same legal regime and forget about the two-tier regime that started in 1991.

I hope that other members will see fit to support the bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments? The member from Renfrew.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** —Nipissing–Pembroke. Thank you very much.

I do want to comment on my colleague from Nepean–Carleton. She did an excellent job. She talked about the supply issue, but the one thing she talked about is the red tape. And this government—Speaker, it is no accident that it's "red" tape. It's never been called "blue" tape; it's called red tape. The reason is that nobody has been better at wrapping up and strangling our economy and the people who create jobs in our economy than the Liberals. I don't know where it started, but it had to come from somebody recognizing that if anybody was going to strangle innovation and anything else, it would be the Liberals with so-called red tape.

I say to the member from Ottawa–Vanier, the issue of supply—well, she says that it's partly addressed in the bill. You can't just ignore the failure of your party—and I know you weren't here for the 14 years, but I know back in Ottawa you must have looked through the television

screen sometimes or through your computer and said, "Oh, my goodness gracious, what are those people doing down there in Toronto? They are just strangling that city."

Now we've got a problem that's bigger than ever because they just kept trucking along and hoping that, somehow, the problem would take care of itself. But the member now, in her brief time—I think she does understand that problems don't solve themselves. You remember Justin Trudeau said, "The budget will balance itself"? Well, he can't balance a budget, and you can't fix the problems with this simple bill. It's been 14 years in the making. It's going to take a lot more than this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** Mr. Speaker, this is a problem, much like other people have said, that has been brewing for a long time. This is a problem that didn't happen overnight. The government knew about the problems, the loopholes that existed, back in 2003 and suggested, initially, that they might do something about it. But the reality is, a decade later, they haven't done anything.

The reason is not because they don't know about the problem. They knew about the problem, but they just don't care. They genuinely do not care and do not understand the plight of people in urban centres in this province. They just don't understand it, nor do they care. They've had the opportunity. In 14 years in power, they could have addressed this issue.

It was only after receiving so much pressure from the media and seeing the leadership of our member from Toronto–Danforth and his bill, Bill 106, that the government finally said, "We're receiving so much pressure. We're facing such dismal approval numbers. We have to do something to recover because things are not looking good."

The problem with this type of politics is that it's cynicism at its worst. This is cynical politics. When polling numbers are low, they start to all of a sudden care about people's hydro bills being so high. When polling numbers and stories come out saying that this government is so disconnected and so out of touch, they're finally starting to say, "Okay, now let's put forward rent controls," 14 years late.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh:** The government can laugh about all this and they can heckle about this, but it's the reality. It's the truth. The people of this province know it and the people of this province will certainly make it clear come election time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** We'll return to the member from Nepean–Carleton for her two-minute wrap-up.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** What a pleasure to hear from my colleagues from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Nickel Belt, Bramalea–Gore–Malton and, of course, Ottawa–Vanier.

I just wanted to point out again what this bill's significant changes will be. The bill will expand rent control to all housing units, eliminating the 1991 exemption. It will

require that all prescribed classes of rental use as a standard lease be developed by the government of Ontario, and I want that to sink in. Landlords who evict a tenant in order to use the unit themselves or for a parent, child or caregiver will now be required to pay tenants one month's compensation. Finally, there will be no above-the-guideline increases for utilities. So the bill will eliminate the ability for them to apply for increases based on extraordinary utility costs.

Again, the Liberals have taken an affordability problem in the province of Ontario and have made it worse. Over the last six weeks, every time they've mused about rent control, landlords increased rents. In many cases, it was their last chance. This bill is only retroactive to April 20, meaning that many of those increases will not be covered. Tenants are the latest affordability victims in the province of Ontario, where the shortage of supply and high costs for landlords have been forcing up rents. The government really does need to take immediate and real action to address the barriers to building more affordable housing in Ontario. My leader has laid out a five-step plan.

To my colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton: I agree with you. This has been a 14-year problem that the government hasn't fixed. You said that they don't care. Well, I'll add this: They were either asleep at the switch or they just didn't care for 14 years. They are the reason we have out-of-control housing and rental costs in the province of Ontario. We, on this side of the House, both the New Democrats and my Progressive Conservatives, have been raising this issue, and this Liberal government has done nothing until they were caught with the public opinion polls being where they are today.

What a pleasure to be here today for this debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** We'll have further debate.

I recognize the member from Windsor West.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to stand down the NDP lead.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The member from Windsor West seeks unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Back to the member from Windsor West.

**Mme Lisa Gretzky:** Merci, monsieur le Président. Il me fait plaisir d'intervenir au nom de mes électeurs de Windsor-Ouest et de participer au débat sur le projet de loi 124.

The bill before us, Bill 124, the Rental Fairness Act, as my colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton so eloquently pointed out, is—well, we were saying that it's 14 years too late, but I'm going to actually get into a little bit of history because the timing is a lot longer than that. It certainly appears as though the government brought forward this legislation as a result of my colleague from Toronto—Danforth tabling a bill, Bill 106, around rent controls and protecting tenants.

One thing that the member from Toronto—Danforth has pointed out is a very large loophole in this bill, and I'm going to touch on that in a bit. He did a member's statement yesterday, and I'm going to read his member's

statement because it really sums up the loophole that's in this bill.

I heard the member from Nepean—Carleton stand and talk about how the Conservatives have actually been talking about rent control and protecting tenants for years now, and that it wasn't until the Liberals took power in 2003 that this problem started and it has just become worse and worse.

I know that the member from St. Catharines is incredible at pulling facts out. He has an incredible memory, so I'm sure he'll be able to correct me if I'm wrong on this. This was well before my time here. I didn't get elected until 2014, so this was actually in 2002. I was doing some research last night, looking for some quotes and things around rent control and protecting tenants. I believe—I could be wrong—that in 2002, one of my colleagues tabled a bill around rent control and protecting tenants. And if I'm not wrong, I believe in 2002, it was actually a Conservative government—it wasn't a Liberal government; it was a Conservative government—and the first person to get up and speak against the bill and against protecting tenants and rent control and in favour of landlords was, I believe, the associate minister of housing. So it wasn't just a member of the Conservative caucus; it was actually the associate minister of housing who spoke out against protections for tenants and rent control.

1700

So the Conservatives like to change the channel now and say that they've always been protecting tenants and rent control and that the Liberals started the problem, but it was actually under the Tories that the problem was happening, and it has just continued under the Liberals and gotten worse. I urge the Conservative caucus—although they don't like to talk about history and they don't like to talk about voting records and the things they've said—I urge them to look it up. It was very easy to find in the Hansard from even back in 2002.

Some of my colleagues have spoken to this before me, and I'm looking forward to my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh—I believe he's doing his hour lead on this tomorrow. He will have a lot more detail to what is or is not in this bill. I only have just 16 minutes left to talk about it, so I'm going to leave most of the detail to him, but I want to touch on some key issues.

I'll go back to my colleague from Toronto—Danforth yesterday and his member's statement. He was talking about vacancy decontrol, and that is what's missing in this bill: getting rid of the vacancy decontrol issue. In fact, the Liberal government promised to eliminate vacancy decontrol and restore real rent control prior to the 2003 election, and it has been breaking that promise ever since. So they campaigned on it, but they've never followed through. Even in this bill, it's not addressed. So I'm shocked they didn't pull it out again as another part of their election platform—maybe they will. But we now see that something that they promise to do, if they form government, is often not what they actually do. We just have to look at Hydro, in fact, where the Premier herself had said, "We are not going to sell off Hydro," and now

we all know that her plan all along was to privatize Hydro One, and we have many people across this province who are choosing between heating or taking their medication, having the lights on or feeding their children, and that's unfortunate. But that's something that we see under this Liberal government. We see the cost of living in this province going up, and it doesn't have to be that way.

Had the government, in this bill, addressed vacancy decontrol as a way to help control the cost of renting a home, renting a place to live—they haven't addressed that. So what we find is that, as a tenant moves out—and in some cases, that's because a landlord is pushing them out; they find creative ways. I want to be clear, Speaker: It's not every landlord that does this. I'm not saying that every landlord is a bad landlord. There are plenty of really good landlords out there. There are some that, unfortunately, will take advantage of different ways of moving tenants out, whether it's leaving an elevator unfixed so somebody has to go up and down stairs, and they can't do that so they have to choose to move out and find a place that's more accessible; whether that's taking a very, very long time to do repairs in a building or in a tenant's lodging, and eventually that tenant just becomes so tired of living in those conditions or the place itself becomes uninhabitable that they have to leave. There are several ways that landlords can make it very difficult for tenants, and a tenant leaves. When that tenant leaves, the landlord then takes the opportunity to increase rents.

My colleague had spoken about some rents here in Toronto that have been going up by 30% or 40%, and it's all because of this tactic. That could have been addressed in this bill, but it's not. It is a huge loophole, and it certainly is not helping the people in this province to allow landlords to do that. Again, not every landlord would do that. I would like to think that the majority of landlords want to do what's right by their tenants because they want stability themselves. If they have a really good tenant, whether that's in a condo that they're subletting, whether that's in an apartment, whether it's someone who owns a home that they're renting out—when you have a good tenant, someone who pays rent on time, takes care of the property and has some pride of living where they do, landlords don't want those people to move out. They want to keep those good tenants. So the majority of landlords wouldn't go to these extremes.

However, there are some who look at the bottom line. They look at how much money they can make by making it difficult for a tenant to stay so that they can raise the rates by quite a large amount and then rent it out to somebody else at that higher cost. That could have been addressed in the bill, and it wasn't.

I'm going to read, with his permission—I did ask to share my colleague from Toronto—Danforth's member statement from yesterday, because he kind of sums up the issue. He is speaking specifically to Toronto, but this would branch out across the province, and I'll tie it into my own home riding of Windsor West and the broader Windsor and Essex county area.

Yesterday, the member from Toronto—Danforth said:

"Last week, the Liberals announced a number of changes to rent control legislation in this province. Unfortunately, there was no mention of a very large loophole in the legislation, and that's called vacancy decontrol.

"In my riding, tenants report that they deal with landlords who cut services, consistently push for above-guideline rent increases, and carry on incredibly disruptive construction as a way of demoralizing tenants, discouraging them and getting them to move out. Unfortunately, those tactics are successful. They do happen, and people see units that friends and family lived in being rented out to a new person at 30% to 40% above what they were paying previously. This is a huge loophole, one which, if not closed, will result in more and more tenants being pushed out as landlords see the opportunity to cash in on the real estate bonanza that's going on in the GTA.

"Tenants worked very hard. They pushed very hard to get protection. They were able to push the Liberals to move some distance, but this loophole still has to be dealt with. This fight is not over. Tenants need the law changed so that their homes will be secure and so they won't be driven out just so that someone can make a killing."

Speaker, I have to say that my colleague from Toronto—Danforth was rather humble in his statement, because he talked about how much tenants have pushed for this, and they have, but the member from Toronto—Danforth has been a very strong political voice when it comes to the protection of tenants and rent control. So I would like to give him credit for his advocacy on behalf of tenants and for tabling Bill 106, which would go a long way to closing this loophole and, as we said earlier, is likely what has sparked—aside from the polling numbers coming in and the popularity of the Liberal Party tanking, his bill is likely what sparked the bill that is before us. I just wish that they would have taken a page from his book and gone the extra distance to really put protection in when we're talking about vacancy decontrol.

I said I would tie his statement into my riding, because we have an interesting thing going on in Windsor. When I moved to Windsor, I moved from London, and the housing in London was more expensive than the housing in Windsor, as were the rents. I was amazed at the location of a house, the size of a house and the condition of a house that I could get for my money, as opposed to what it was like in London at the time. We definitely, at the time, were able to upgrade our living conditions when we moved to Windsor, because the housing market was so economical. At the time, we were able to buy rather than rent, because rents were actually at the same level or slightly higher than purchasing a home. You were able to get a mortgage at a much lower rate and pay a lower mortgage payment than you were for rent in many cases. For us, that was a bonus. It was a very pleasant surprise to be able to move into this other city and find out that we could get a bigger home and a nicer home.

1710

For many people, what we found was that as they moved into Windsor, they were finding the same thing. They were choosing to purchase a home rather than to rent. What we're finding now, because of what's going on in the GTA and because housing costs were so affordable in Windsor—and, Speaker, you should see the comparison. I should have taken a picture of what my house looks like in Windsor compared to my brother's house here in Toronto. From the outside, they are almost identical homes. The square footage is almost identical. The size of the lot is almost identical. We both have garages. They are almost identical homes. It's kind of funny because he bought his first. He thinks that because he's my big brother, I copied him when I bought mine. But the houses are almost identical. The costs were incredibly different.

When my brother purchased his home, he was around the half-a-million mark. I'm not afraid to share that for my home in Windsor, I paid just over \$150,000 for my home two years ago. It's in a really nice neighbourhood and it's basically the same house, the same layout, as my brother's house here in Toronto.

Fast-forward the two years since I bought my house, and compare the prices: My brother's house's worth is probably double to three times what he paid for it many, many years ago. My home, in this real estate market now—and remember; it's only been two years since we've owned this home—we could turn around and sell that house for anywhere between \$150,000 to \$200,000 more than we paid. The reason for that is—I'd like to think it's because it's a beautiful home, but as I said, in Windsor, housing is affordable, and it still is, compared to other jurisdictions.

The reason that the cost of housing has gone up in Windsor, and the cost of rent, is because it is becoming so unaffordable for people to own property in Toronto, in the GTA; it's becoming so unaffordable and unattainable for them to actually buy a property. At the same time, rents have gone way up, so it's becoming a burden for people to even be able to afford to rent here in the GTA.

What's happening is that those who normally would own property here or rent here are relocating to Windsor because, although our housing costs have gone up and our rents have gone up, it's still a lot more affordable to live in Windsor than it is here in Toronto. The big issue that we're having—and we welcome new people to Windsor. In fact, our population has started to rebound. Our unemployment rate has dropped. Good things have happened, and it has all happened since we got rid of the Liberals and it's all New Democrats in Windsor. I need to point that out.

The problem we're finding in Windsor is there's now a shortage. There's a housing shortage, which is part of the reason why the cost has gone up. The reason there's a housing shortage is because investors from Toronto are buying up homes in Windsor. They don't care what it costs because, compared to Toronto, it's still very economical. They come in, they're driving up—in some

cases, houses are going well over \$100,000 over asking. They're buying these properties and they're turning them into rental properties. Since it's becoming a little more difficult—

*Interjection.*

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** The member from Beaches-East York is applauding, but it's not a good thing. Clearly, he wasn't listening to me. It's not a good thing because, as the housing prices go up in Windsor as quickly as they are, you have people from Toronto who are buying homes to rent out in Windsor. They have no intention of living in these homes—ever. They are there to make a dollar; that's all they care about. They've driven up the cost of rent and they're now driving up our housing costs.

The people who actually want to live in Windsor, the people who want to relocate and come to Windsor, those of us who have been in Windsor a very long time, can't afford to buy a home because this is happening. They can't afford to even rent property because you have landlords, like we want to address but the Liberals aren't, who will push people out of properties. They'll buy a property; they'll make it difficult for long-term tenants to stay. They'll move them out and raise the rates, and the next thing you know, the people in my riding and across the area can't afford to live in housing they've always lived in. This is a problem.

So for the member from Beaches-East York on the Liberal side to applaud it and say it's a good thing is absurd. It's absurd, and it angers me that he would think it's a good thing for the people of my riding. It just goes to show how out of touch he is—him specifically, as well as the rest of the Liberal caucus.

Speaker, since I'm talking about unaffordability for living, I wanted to tie that into how, as costs go up, as people can't afford to buy homes, as people can't afford to rent, they often find themselves out on the street.

I applaud the efforts of organizations like the United Way and those community partners that they work with who undertake what's called a point-in-time count. What they do is they go out on a specific day and they try to actually get a count of how many people are living on the street, how many homeless people there are. It's not an easy task. What they don't capture is the number of people who are referred to as couch surfers, and often these are youth, unfortunately, who aren't necessarily going to be out on the street that day. They're not going to be sleeping out on the street that night because somebody they know has generously offered to let them stay on the couch for the night.

When they do point-in-time counts, they don't count the couch surfers or those who can, from time to time, find a place to stay just for a night. But they do go out and try to get a count of how many homeless persons there are and, in some cases, they try to track other things. They'll ask them about their background. They'll ask about their education. They'll ask about any medical conditions they may have. They'll ask about what their home life was prior to being out on the street. They'll ask them what their housing was like prior to being out on

the street. They'll ask about their income and how they ended up on the street. One of the questions they ask, because they want to know, is how many veterans are out on the street because they can't afford housing. They want to know the history of the people who are out on the street so that they can help the politicians and help the government address the issue of homelessness.

As we're finding more and more people can't afford to purchase a home or more and more people are going through the cycle where a landlord has certain behaviours that would drive a tenant out just so they can raise the rents, so that these people can no longer afford to live where they are, we're going to find that more and more people are going to end up in shelters; they're going to end up on the street.

Certainly, we would like to eradicate homelessness completely, but when you have people who are out on the street, there are so many other things that come along with that. You see them struggling with mental health issues. You see them struggling with drug and alcohol addictions. With their medical conditions, they often end up in hospital for treatment because they're not able to eat properly, they're not able to access food at all or the food they can get is not food that is healthy for them. They could end up in the corrections system.

So you find that the issue with not really controlling rent and not really protecting tenants is one that just snowballs over time and there's so much more to it than just providing somebody a home that they can afford to live in.

I'm really disappointed with the bill that we have before us. There are some good things and they've moved in the right direction, but they really should have addressed the vacancy decontrol to address the cost for tenants to have a home to live in.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Questions and comments?

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** I want to thank the member for Windsor West and just emphasize some aspects of this bill that I think should be taken into consideration. In particular, she mentioned unsavory tactics by some landlords that would fail to repair elevators. I'd just point out that indeed this bill does provide some measures to encourage and create the right incentives for landlords to deal with elevator repairs. Indeed, that's part of the bill: to prevent landlords from accessing above-the-guideline rental increases if there are still elevator repairs that have not been done, if there are still work orders on elevator repairs that have not been done. So I think we are certainly addressing some of the issues that have been raised.

I want to say, as well, the bill also makes a point of ensuring that transitional housing is protected to the extent that it ensures that homeless people who access transitional housing are protected and are able to stay there for longer than the current one year. The bill does provide for an expansion of the extension so that treatment could last longer than one year because many of the people coming from the street have spoken and

have emphasized the point that some of the skills they need to acquire to go into permanent housing involve more than a short year, more than 12 months. They sometimes need to have therapy and deal with their addictions. They might need as well to recuperate some life skills that they have lost when they were homeless. The bill addresses this in a comprehensive way, and I look forward to hearing some more.

1720

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I'm pleased to offer a couple of comments in the debate on Bill 124. The thing that concerns me about this bill is the bigger picture of handling what we've seen happening on the housing front, and the spillover now into the rental supply. We've listened for months about the housing crisis because there is a lack of supply. Certainly in my riding we see the subdivisions sprouting out, but we also see the price rising, and the notion that families can afford half a million dollars for their starter house is just something that is hard to contemplate. But what this does is put the pressure, then, on sort of the backup position, which is of course rental facilities. My concern is that this process that we're looking at will only discourage people from investing in rental buildings.

I remember in the late 1990s, when it wasn't so much the housing crisis as it was the rental. The big job is to demonstrate to those investors that they are going into a solid, financially stable kind of environment to be able to invest in new rental buildings. If they feel that there are some hiccups, some shortages, some issues legal and otherwise, then they're not going to help us out on this file with the shortage of rental, as well as housing.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** I just simply want to commend my colleague from Windsor West, who spoke eloquently for 20 minutes. Although she began her address saying that she was going to leave a lot to our colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh, who is our lead on this, she elaborated quite a lot about what the bill has in it—the good, the bad and the ugly.

Certainly we can attribute this bill being before us today to the hard work from our colleague the member from Toronto—Danforth, who has fought for the issue of affordable housing and rent control for years and years. Our Toronto/GTA caucus, together, has put forward bills many, many times that have been, ultimately, the impetus for government initiatives when they finally understand that it's time to do something.

For a government that's 14 years in the making, this isn't something that we should have to have waited for. Since 2003, they've promised to do something to support renters and support affordable housing, but it isn't until we see their poll numbers dropping in substantial areas—in areas where they know that if they lose, they're likely to lose government—that we actually see some action on their part.

We can look at inclusionary zoning. That was an initiative born out of the New Democratic side here. What happened when we put forward a bill? When we put forward a bill, what happened? The Liberals all of a sudden figured that it's something that's important to them, and that is going to raise their profile and their electoral success.

Again, we see a government that is reaching, and one that is desperate in putting forward a bill. We'll see if this bill actually sees the light of day and passes through the process. But we are definitely supportive of protection for renters.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. Arthur Potts:** It's a pleasure to rise and give comment to the member from Windsor West in her comments on this bill here today.

I was a little surprised as I was listening to her and I thumped my desk and she took umbrage. I thought I was praising her for her comments about how we're creating more rental opportunities in Windsor. I appreciate now she thinks it's a bad thing that people might be out there investing in private properties and trying to create new housing opportunities for people.

The market will dictate what levels are appropriate to spend, because that seems to be the big part of this challenge, and the very blunt instrument that the member from Toronto–Danforth came forward with, just a single line, a single plan to take away what he called the loophole of 1991—we know that the impact of full rental controls on all building could mean that we would slow down the growth in the building of new buildings. So there was a whole series of comprehensive measures that were brought in.

The most important thing—and I haven't heard anyone talk about it and I hope to be able to talk at more length when I have a chance to speak to this bill directly—is the notion of reducing the property tax associated with multi-residential units, that if in downtown Toronto you build a condo building with so many apartments in it, so many units, and you build a rental building, the renters are paying up to four times as much property tax for the same square footage, the same basic units. It's because of a vagary in the property tax system where single-family-home owners typically directed the politicians of the day because they were the voters and the tenants weren't. So tenants have been perennially disadvantaged over the years.

We've made very direct opportunity here in this bill to fix that, which will go a long way to encouraging more development of rental space in the province of Ontario—right across the province, including Windsor, Windsor West, and downtown, in Beaches–East York. In my own community, I know now that developers are looking at two towers they've been reluctant to build but they can now afford to move forward with.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Back to the member from Windsor West for final comments.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I'd like to thank all the colleagues in the chamber for getting up and adding their thoughts to my comments, but I'm going to home in specifically on the member from Beaches–East York because, rather than listening to what I actually said—at no point did I say I don't support having rental properties. Never once did I say that. What I actually said—and rather than him playing political games and taking potshots, he should have been listening to what I said. What I said was—

*Interjections.*

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I don't think the member from Beaches–East York should be laughing when I'm talking about people purchasing properties and jacking up the rents so that the people in my city cannot afford to live in the city anymore. I don't support that. When you have good landlords, when you have those who want to follow the rules and treat the renters well, and they're going to provide affordable housing for people, I fully support that. If people from an area like the GTA want to move to Windsor because they can find something affordable and it's a city they want to come and live in, I welcome them. I welcome them to my city.

But what I don't support is the loophole that the government has left in this bill which means that landlords—whether it's from within the city or whether it's somebody from another city who comes into my city or any other city and purchases a property with no intention of ever living there, makes it difficult for the tenants to stay in that affordable housing, and pushes them out the door just so they can raise the rent and sit back in their home in another city and collect the big fat cheques, I can't support that.

The fact that the member from Beaches–East York sat over there and laughed about me saying that is shameful. Rather than getting up and taking—and he's laughing at me now again. Now he's laughing again. He thinks it's funny. It is not a funny issue. Shame on you for thinking it's acceptable.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further debate?

**Mr. Han Dong:** Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Barrie, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

It's my pleasure to speak to this very important bill. As my opposition colleague pointed out, there are many people in my riding of Trinity–Spadina who are renters, and they definitely welcome this great news.

Before I begin, I just want to share with you some of my observations. Since I was elected in 2014, I've sat here and participated in debates, and sometimes—like, I understand the opposition party members' role is to give us their perspective and be constructively criticizing the government's initiatives, but sometimes it gets very confusing to figure out the logic from over there. We hear, too often, them say, "The government doesn't listen; they don't consult us," and then they say, "Oh, that was our initiative; they just stole our idea." They have to balance

it out. I don't quite understand what they really want sometimes.

1730

To the point that was made by the Conservative member across the floor: One minute they're saying, "We should let the market determine the price; let the market figure it out." On the other hand, they say, "The government has sat on their hands too long and have done nothing." So they have to figure out whether they are asking the government to do something or they want us not to do something at all.

But I'm very pleased to speak on this very comprehensive bill—and one more thing I wanted to point out: that they mentioned red tape. In my riding, there are many projects going on; for example, the one at Honest Ed's and the revitalization of that entire block. It took community members, builders, city planners, councillors and myself to be involved in the plan. I think it is fair to consult well with the community, with the neighbourhood, to hear what they have to say and their vision on these types of developments. In fact, this development will have rental units in it.

I think, to some of the Conservative members, they think this is part of red tape. They just want to rush it through. I don't think they are fans of consultation, because by their definition, things should be done in a flash.

I'm very pleased to talk about rental supply. I just want to point out the argument made by the members opposite with regard to the supply of rental housing, and I just want to say that, contrary to what they have said, the old legislation from 1991 did not achieve its core objective of encouraging rental unit supply. Of the 1.45 million housing completions between 1992 and 2016, purpose-built private rental units accounted for only 6%—6%, Speaker—or around 92,700 units. We know clearly that their plan to let the market determine how much supply there should be for the rental market did not work. We have to introduce this comprehensive plan.

I want to speak to the four new measures that encourage a strong supply of new rental units, including reducing costs for landlords by aligning property tax rates for purpose-built rentals with other residential properties like condos and houses; looking at provincially owned lands for affordable housing, incentivizing builders to build new rental units; introducing a targeted \$125-million five-year plan to encourage more purpose builds; and also setting up a dedicated team to work with developers and municipalities to remove barriers to development and get the shovels in the ground faster.

I think these are very good initiatives, and I can't wait to see them put into action.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Continuing the debate, I recognize the member from Barrie.

**Ms. Ann Hoggarth:** We all recognize that housing costs are rising dramatically all across Ontario, but particularly in the GTHA, and that there are not enough affordable rental options to meet people's needs.

I told the story of a woman who came to me not long ago who had \$500 to rent a room in Barrie. We searched

all over to try and find her a room, and we could not. That seemed like a reasonable amount of money to rent a room, but there were no rooms to be found.

We've all heard stories of rent-gouging going on in today's rental market. It's wrong and it's not at all fair. If passed, our bill would expand rent control to all private rental units, including those built after 1991. Going forward, every renter in Ontario will have the peace of mind of knowing their rent is not going to increase beyond roughly the rate of inflation, and that is fair to both sides.

By passing this bill, approximately a quarter of a million more people will be protected from unreasonable rent hikes. We believe that whether you're a senior on a fixed income or a young professional just starting off, all Ontarians deserve a rent that is affordable and predictable.

Seniors, in my riding in particular, are particularly at risk. Most young people are at the beginning of their earning capabilities. Seniors, on the other hand—most of them have no more earning potential. They're worried about the little bits of savings they have left or the equity that they have left in their homes. They need this rent control. This includes seniors in land-lease agreements. In Wasaga Beach, there are companies that have built land-lease communities, and they are gouging those seniors. They are afraid that they are going to have to move out of those spots. This will help those people in particular.

Rent increase notices given on or after April 20, 2017, would be capped at the rent increase guideline of 2.5%; in other words, limited to the rate of inflation. Those opposed to these new protections would rather see a quarter of a million Ontarians not currently covered stay that way. That's unacceptable. Whether you're a senior on a fixed income or a young professional starting off, all Ontarians deserve rent that is affordable and predictable.

The argument that rent control will decrease the supply of rental housing does not hold water either. Contrary to what some say, the old legislation from 1991 did not achieve its objective of encouraging rental housing, as my colleague has said. Of the 1.45 million housing completions between 1992 and 2016, purpose-built private rental units accounted for only 6%, or around 92,700 units, with pre-1991 rental units continuing to appreciate in value and attract new capital investment because of their profitability. The evidence suggests that Ontario's version of rent control allows landlords to make a fair return on their investment as well.

"The case for rent control is clear-cut," David Macdonald, a senior economist from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, stated.

The argument against rent control is that developers will build more rentals without it. But in Ontario, the exact opposite has happened. You saw 14,000 units built in 1991, and when rent controls were removed, it dropped to under 1,000 five years later. Even today, only around 7,000 new rental units are built each year, roughly half of what we were building 25 years ago. Landlords gouging tenants is not going to create new rental units.

I thank you, sir, and I urge everyone to support this bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Furthering debate, I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** It's a delight for me to get on the record for a few words this afternoon. I just want to tell the good folks of Peterborough riding to tune in to Cogeco 95 to see us live today. I know many of them, of course, are getting ready to sit down for supper—maybe a Yorkshire Valley chicken produced right in the riding of Peterborough, and other good things. Good things grow in Ontario.

I want to talk about the supply of housing. I thought somebody would want me to talk about supply management today. I could certainly do that. That would be a topic very close and dear to my heart, but I've got to talk about rental supply today.

When you're looking for good advice, I think there's no better adviser than one William Grenville Davis. He was Ontario's very distinguished Premier from 1971 to the fall of 1984. Of course, during his time as education minister, he built the community college system. But if you read Steve Paikin's book, a very good book about Mr. Davis, entitled Bill Davis: Nation Builder, and Not So Bland After All—I want to get into one very important chapter.

It's the lead-up to the 1975 provincial election. Stephen Lewis is leading the NDP at that particular time. Bob Nixon, the great farmer from St. George, is leading the Ontario Liberal Party. There had been some softening, one might say, in Tory support right here in Toronto. We've got to remember that rents were starting to escalate in Toronto significantly. The cost of housing was escalating as we were getting closer and closer to that 1975 provincial election.

1740

Mr. Davis has always been one of my political heroes—a highly intelligent individual. So what did he do to correct that crisis? He brought in a land speculation tax, something that my colleague the finance minister of Ontario has talked about. Secondly, more importantly, Mr. Davis brought in a rent control program in 1975, just before the election. He did so because Mr. Davis was concerned about ordinary Torontonians. Rents were going up so high that young people who wanted to rent an apartment and then eventually move into a house of their own weren't getting that chance to fill that Canadian dream of home ownership.

When we're looking at good examples—we truly do stand on the shoulders of others, but if you're looking for a good example of good politics and good public policy, Mr. Davis has provided the template for us. Essentially, that's what we're doing here. As I said, the finance minister said that we're bringing in a speculation tax, like Mr. Davis did, to kind of cool out that side of the market, and bringing in a very robust rent control program.

I must admit that I'm a landlord myself in the great riding of Peterborough, and I'm pleased to say that at the

one small rental property we have in Peterborough—very small—we've had the same tenants for over two decades. We look after them very well. In fact, I'm pleased to say that over 20 years, we haven't increased the rent over that 20-year period, out of respect that these people are very good tenants.

I think that's the way we've got to look at this policy. When you have very good tenants, you give them a reasonable break in life, right? You make sure that the rental accommodation is in very good shape. In fact, I've got to put up a new fence. It's on my to-do list for this spring. I've got to get at it. Maybe I'll get Mr. Wilson to give me a hand. I hear he's kind of a handyman when it comes to carpentry.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** It will be leaning right.

**Hon. Jeff Leal:** It could be. That's better than no fence at all, I say to my friend from Simcoe—Grey. A fence is a fence is a fence.

But I think we really have an obligation, and I think the approach we have here is very sound.

Do you know what? I'm told that one of the most distinguished people ever to serve in this Legislature, one Tim Hudak—he was a cabinet minister in the Harris-Eves government, a very fine Leader of the Opposition who articulated Conservative principles to a T. Now, of course, he's the head of the Ontario Real Estate Association. He said that he's very impressed with what this government is doing to try to take some of that heat out of the housing market, to make sure that we retain affordability—and Mayor Tory and Jim Watson, the mayor of Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, you can truly see that a consensus is building in the province of Ontario to support our legislation. I know Mr. Davis, at his home today on Main Street in Brampton—he may be tuned in to see our proceedings today, because I understand he still watches. He was the guy who put this policy in place, a speculation tax and rent controls. We want to build on the Davis legacy, which was an important one to the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I now recognize the member from Scarborough—Agricourt.

**Ms. Soo Wong:** I'm very pleased to follow the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and small business. He provided the historical context of today's conversation and debate on Bill 124.

I am very pleased to see our government taking initiative on this particular issue, especially for our renters who are seniors, who are on fixed incomes. Because we know there have been concerns raised from all three parties about the issue of high housing costs across Ontario, particularly on the issue of affordable housing. We are taking action on the whole issue of rent control.

Rent control already exists in Ontario for those buildings built prior to 1991. If passed, the legislation will ensure that there is fairness for rental across the board, making sure there is more comprehensive reform addressing issues such as illegal clauses in the leases, unfounded evictions, rent increases above the provincial guidelines and elevator maintenance. I want to recognize

my colleague from Trinity–Spadina and his leadership when it comes to the issue of elevator maintenance and all the other work. Thank you very much, member from Trinity–Spadina.

I also want to recognize the Minister of Housing, because at the end of the day, this hot issue happens to be on his desk right now. But the minister himself has been leading the way to address this issue across the board.

The other piece I wanted to discuss in today's debate is the piece about rent control, because my colleague from Barrie also said that, if passed, the legislation will cap the rent increase for those houses that were built after 1991 to the rent guideline of 2.5%. That is manageable, especially for those seniors in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt or young professionals on a limited budget or a fixed income like seniors. They need predictability and affordability to live in a home.

As a former nurse, we know housing is part of the determinants of health. At the end of the day, if we don't have affordable housing, how are we going to address the health of Ontarians?

I'm going to encourage all my colleagues opposite to put this bill forward but, more importantly, to continue to hear the dialogue from Ontarians when they go before the committee on Bill 124.

The other piece of the legislation that we've got to make sure—I want to make sure I'm on the record about this piece. Those who oppose this bill are saying that if you put in this rent control, we will prevent developers from building more affordable housing units. The facts don't speak to that. The facts show 1.4 million housing completions between 1992 and 2016, and I think my colleague from Barrie talked about that piece. The units that had been built during that period of time are not that significant. Furthermore, we've got to address the affordable housing piece. The minister himself, in his legislation, talked about introducing \$125 million over five years targeting municipal development charge rebates to encourage more development in terms of rental units.

The other piece here is that the minister himself is again leading the charge on this whole issue of provincial land. We know, as a province, as the government of Ontario, we own a number of provincial lands across Ontario. We are looking at how to incentivize developers to build affordable housing rental units across Ontario. As a member from Toronto, I know this is a very, very important issue to my constituents, but I would dare say to constituents across Ontario.

The other piece that the minister is also addressing right now is helping landlords, making sure that their property taxes for the purpose of rentals—again, making sure it's affordable and addressing those condominiums that are built across the city of Toronto and the greater Golden Horseshoe area.

At the end of the day, I believe all of us here in the chamber want to ensure our constituents have accessibility to affordable housing and that housing rental costs should be stable but affordable and predictable. Because at the end of the day, if we don't have predictability, it

will be a challenge for those seniors or those individuals on fixed incomes.

I'm looking forward to continued debate on Bill 124.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Questions and comments?

**Mrs. Gila Martow:** I'm very pleased to rise and speak a little bit on Bill 124, the Rental Fairness Act. Basically, we again see action by the Liberal government—they've been in power for 14 years and they wait until the poll numbers are down, until there is a crisis situation.

Really, I feel for the activists, because there are fantastic people in all of our communities who speak out, who email, who phone, who come down to Queen's Park and who are very concerned. I often have to say to people, "We're working within the parameters of the acts, of the laws in Ontario. Become an activist and go out there and change the laws and change the system and change the regulations." Unfortunately, too often, we see that things are very slow to change around here and people feel very frustrated and oftentimes give up on their cause.

We do have a problem, in the greater Toronto area specifically, but in Ontario, with housing. We have a problem with affordable housing, but we also have a problem with family-oriented housing and the whole aspect of having green space, of having community centres, of having schools available for the children of the families. It's not just about rent control. It's not just about affordability. It's also about accessibility issues and the services that are available.

1750

We're seeing specific things in this bill about how tenants would be compensated one month's compensation if the space was needed, say, for a basement apartment for a family member who was moving in, but then, if that family member decided not to stay for a full year, the family would be penalized one month's rent for not—I guess the assumption is that they weren't really needing that space.

There are no guidelines for increases in utilities. We're seeing soaring hydro costs in Ontario. That's another problem with affordable housing, that the hydro costs are often built into the rent.

I'm looking forward to us moving forward and having more affordable, more accessible, more family-friendly and healthier housing in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments? The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Windsor West, Speaker, although I'm happy to take credit for Windsor–Tecumseh too.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Forgive me. The member for Windsor West.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I just don't want to do his hour lead tomorrow. We can let him have that.

I'd like to start by thanking the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, because she talked about something that I talked about, and I know, having been a nurse, she truly understands the importance of housing—

quality, affordable, stable housing—when it comes to the overall health of the people in this province. So I applaud you for bringing that up, because that is a very important piece when we are talking about protecting tenants and when we are talking about rent control. We can't talk about one without talking about the other.

As I said in my time, it's a snowball effect. When someone doesn't have a place to stay, a stable home or a good-quality home to stay in, often we see their health decline. They have mental health issues. Sometimes they will have addiction issues. And that just perpetuates the problem of then obtaining affordable, sustainable, appropriate housing.

The member from Thornhill touched on something, which was how long it has taken for action or how we often see inaction. She's not inaccurate in that. Again, we've highlighted that it has taken 14 years to get here. The current Liberal government, in 2003, ran on getting rid of vacancy decontrol, and that's not in this bill. So in that part, we see inaction.

She said she feels sorry for activists because often they bring their issues forward and they are not heard and they get discouraged, and that's true. Today, in Bill 124, they have achieved a victory. There is that big loophole that should be addressed, but they have achieved a victory for their advocacy, and that is largely in part due to my colleague from Toronto—Danforth bringing his political voice to the table.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**M<sup>me</sup> Nathalie Des Rosiers:** Ça me fait plaisir de continuer de participer au débat. Merci beaucoup à tous les intervenants.

It's obviously very important that we focus on the intricacies of the bill and recognize how important it is to pass it at this point. This bill, I think, responds well to the inadequacy of the regulatory scheme for tenancy in Ontario. It responds to the irritants that were identified throughout the consultation over the last year and a half—many irritants that are being covered here. It certainly is rent control, but it's rent control plus. It is rent control with a view to ensuring that indeed it also responds to some of the ways in which landlords were escaping or trying to distort the spirit of the act.

I think what is important here is to look at diminishing the burden on people that are on a fixed income by providing certainty. We must recognize that the cost of living at this stage is 1.5% per year, and that would be the increase that would be allowable for now. This is an important aspect of the bill to provide some certainty about how rent increases can occur. It does not prevent a landlord from having above-guideline increases, provided that it's legitimate, it's done in good faith and it is on capital expenditures that are necessary.

The bill provides a good balance between the rights of tenants and landlords, and we certainly hope that it will be supported.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions and comments?

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I just want to join with others in saying a few words on behalf of constituents, particularly constituents whom I have in Angus and in Barrie—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** Sorry, in Wasaga Beach. I know that the member from Barrie is concerned about this too, and I know the member from York—Simcoe is—so, Simcoe county members. We have been approached, particularly over the last three years, by those who lease land in land-lease communities. As I read the bill—and I'll ask, maybe, the honourable member who is giving the final response on the Liberal side—it looks to me like they will be included now under what we call the regular rent controls. I want to be positive and say that that's a good thing. Certainly, I had written the ministers many times—Mr. McMeekin and the current minister—and the Premier.

As I mentioned, other members have worked very hard because there has been—although Parkbridge, the owners of the land, are very nice people. I think they try to do a good job, and they certainly provide a quality product. But the fact that their leases are all over the board—a lot of these people are retired and they're seniors, and they don't always understand every clause. Sometimes, the clauses appear to be a bit misleading in saying, "You are under the Residential Tenancies Act, but not under the rent control part of the Residential Tenancies Act." I know, when I read one of their brochures that was brought to my attention about three years ago, I was trying to be generous in spirit, but I looked at it and said, "That doesn't seem clear enough."

Certainly, the people who were talking to me about it, the many, many residents—we had many, many meetings in Wasaga Beach from communities around Lake Simcoe. They came over, as I said, from Angus, Barrie and other areas in Simcoe county. They weren't people who couldn't read the law. Very intelligent people were in those communities, and they were even confused about their own leases.

The mandatory lease is a good idea. I think that bringing the land-lease communities under rent control is a good idea, and I thank the government for that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Back to the member from Trinity—Spadina for final comments.

**Mr. Han Dong:** I've listened carefully to my colleagues' comments and their points with regard to this bill. I want to specifically thank the member from Simcoe—Grey for his comments, because it's along the lines of points that I want to bring forward to this House.

I know that there are many good small landlords out there providing a part of their home to the rental market. These are usually seniors or people who were first-generation newcomers—there are many in my riding—who, after lifelong hard work, finally own a property. They are on a fixed income and looking to rent out their secondary suite and provide the rental market some additional supply. I think we must keep in mind that these small landlords' rights are protected and they are not hurt unintentionally.

In the RTA, what we are proposing will provide a fast-track eviction process for illegal drug activity, actions that seriously impair the safety of others, deliberate damage to a unit or to the apartment building, and causing a disturbance in a smaller complex where the landlord also resides. Protecting landlords and providing incentives, like vacancy decontrol, to increase and to maintain the supply in the rental market is a must, and it's a healthy move. I applaud the ministry for considering that. That is the best way of ensuring an affordable, strong, healthy rental housing market that meets the needs of both tenants and landlords, especially in urban centres like the one I represent, Trinity-Spadina.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for up to five minutes.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** Thank you, Speaker. We are having some real problems in health care in Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Just one of the issues is the chronic shortage of adequate funding for our hospitals and long-term-care facilities.

This past winter, the Cornwall Community Hospital was experiencing occupancy rates of 138%, with patients on stretchers in hallways, empty offices and any cubby-holes that staff could find.

Speaker, this is not a new problem. Part of the problem stems back to a lack of long-term-care beds that has been ignored by this government for over 14 years. They have not built any net new beds in this province since taking over 13 years ago. You can only imagine the problems this is causing as the number of people over the age of 75 has been increasing dramatically since 2003.

Back before the 2011 election, the Cornwall Community Hospital was experiencing the same problem with alternative-level-of-care, or ALC, patients blocking hospital beds, needing care but having no place to go. The McGuinty government funded 32 beds in the former Cornwall General Hospital to handle some of the demand.

In early 2013, this government, through the CCAC, was shutting down these beds, saying they had no need for them. Apparently the problem had miraculously solved

itself and these beds were never needed, or at least that was the message from the ministry through the CCAC. I contacted the CCAC about my concerns, and they reassured me this was not a problem.

Then I referred to the 2012 Auditor General's report that was just a couple of months' old at the time, and it ranked our region as having the worst wait times in Ontario, where patients were waiting over three years to get a bed. When I asked her if they had included the growth in demand generated by the increase in the number of seniors turning 75—expected to double by 2030—she came back and reassured me again that they indeed had enough long-term-care beds to actually go beyond 2030 in spite of the population doubling.

Speaker, if you do the simple math, then there are only two alternatives that can happen there. If the facilities they had were adequate and population was going to double, that meant they had double the facilities they needed back in 2013. So either the CCAC was doing a terrible job at managing the system or they weren't telling the truth—or both. Which is it?

You can imagine at 138% capacity, this year has been a nightmare for the staff at our hospital as they try to provide quality and compassionate care. Stats from the OHA, Ontario Hospital Association, show that funding from the Ministry of Health has not kept up with inflation for over nine years. In fact, four of the past five years have seen a 0% increase, not even covering inflation.

This morning, the minister fired back with a stat that the Cornwall Community Hospital had received a 4.5% increase just this year, trying to indicate that they are well looked after. But what he neglected to say was that, last year, they had a 2.5% decrease. These are the types of tricks we're seeing played by this government. That was in the year ending 2016, and that was only after a late increase last fall because there have been hours and hours of study that show that they were chronically underfunded. This government talks about honesty and transparency, but we're getting everything but.

I hear over and over again about the 1% increase in hospital funding. So one of my other hospitals I met with—they have a chronic problem with underfunding. They're experiencing almost a \$1-million cut. So, taking the government at their word, I asked them about that 1% funding increase. Well, he explained that the budgets are broken down into three pots. In this one pot, the smallest of the three, they got the 1% increase, but in the other two pots they got over a \$1-million decrease. So the net result was just under a \$1-million cut.

People expect honesty from their elected people, and they deserve it. Instead, we see a culture where public not-for-profits are continually cut and threatened that next year could be worse if the public finds out.

The health of Ontario's hospitals is suffering and it's time that we make a change. It's time that we actually look at what's needed and provide that funding. There are too many scandals in this government that there are no limits on. It's time to look after our basic needs.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care now has up to five minutes.

**Mr. John Fraser:** It's a pleasure to respond to the member opposite. I was happy to see him last Saturday night back in Ottawa. Some of the people at the event we were at thought he came from far away. I said, "Cornwall is only an hour away."

Hospitals are important to all of us, in all of our communities. I appreciate the member coming forward. I do know that his hospital in particular received over \$4 million. As a matter of fact, we redeveloped over 150 long-term-care beds in Cornwall.

One of the challenges that we have is we hear from the other side, "You're cutting hospital funding," when year over year, we're increasing hospital funding, when the health budget increases year over year. I appreciate that the member has got to stand up and do what he believes is right for his community, but I would like to underscore the fact that to say that we've cut health care funding is simply not true.

One of the things that we've tried to address is our wait times. If you look at both the Fraser Institute and the Wait Time Alliance, Ontario has consistently ranked as having some of the shortest wait times in Canada. Those are critical things. Those are things like hip and knee replacements; cataracts; access to MRIs and diagnostic services.

I know that inside the Champlain LHIN, they have a very effective hip and knee replacement regime, where they have a single queue. If you want to get your hip or your knee replaced, you can go into a single queue and get the next available surgeon or you can go to the surgeon you would like to go to who may have a longer waiting list. But that way, they've been able to reduce wait times. They're working toward doing that with MRIs as well.

I think last Tuesday or Wednesday, we had a debate about debt. The thing that I find really interesting from the members opposite is, we have a motion, and the Leader of the Opposition is saying, "You've got to take care of the debt. You've got to take care of the deficit,"

but what I also hear from the other side from the members across is, "But I've got this hospital." "I've got this thing in my riding." "There's this road."

You can't have it both ways. You have to pick a lane. You can't reduce the debt and deficit and make more investments in public services. You can't say, "We're going to take away 100,000 jobs" and improve public services. I know that was the last campaign, but I'm not sure that's changed. I know the Leader of the Opposition wasn't a member here at that time, but he was present when that was announced. He was there. He was standing beside the former Leader of the Opposition when he made that statement.

We all have to make sure that we work hard—and we all work hard in our communities to make sure that the health care people need and want is there. But we can't fool ourselves. We're trying to put resources in in a way that's balanced and meets all those needs. You can't allocate those resources and ask for more resources, and at the same time say, "Use less. We'll use less." It's not going to work. It's just simple math. So you have to pick a lane about what it is you want to do.

I really very much appreciate what the member opposite is doing and what he's saying. I don't agree with all the things he's saying.

I do want to encourage members on the other side—is it public services? Is it debt? Is it public service jobs? Where are you going? What's your path? You're in almost every lane; it depends what day.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to have a late show. I have a great deal of respect for the member. I want to thank you all for your time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I'd like to thank both members for a very respectful discussion and debate pertaining to concerns that had been raised earlier.

There being no further business to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to have been carried. This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

*The House adjourned at 1810.*



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